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THE ANCHORITE AND OTHER STORIES

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THE ANCHORITE

AND OTHER STORIES

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PREFACE

The following stories are with one exception based upon facts that have come under my notice while sessions judge in India or have been related to me by friends as their true experiences. One story only is entirely fiction. I shall leave it to my readers to decide which it is.

Two of these stories have already appeared in Blackwood's magazine and two in the Hindustan Review. My thanks are due to the editors for their kind permission to reproduce them in book form.

C. A. K.

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THE ANCHORITE

It was the tenth of the bright half of Kartik, or in the phraseology of Europe, somewhere towards the end of October, I had gone down to Pandharpur, the great seat of Krishna-worship in the Maratha country, that I might see the pilgrims come from all parts of the Deccan—indeed from all parts of India—to prostrate themselves before the image of the god. There was still a good deal of water in the Bhima river, that runs in a wide sweep past Pandharpur, and the ferrymen were doing a roaring business, plying their ferry-boats full of pilgrims, armed with yellow flags, across the river. The red horse-heads which adorn every Pandharpur ferry-boat bobbed up and down as they breasted the current, and the men and women on board laughed as the waves splashed them and wetted their clothes.

Suddenly I saw a begging bowl thrust under my nose, and I heard a deep, gruff voice say in a whine, that was yet half a threat—

"Alms! alms! In the name of God, give me alms!"

I turned and saw a man in the saffron garb of the anchorite with shaven head and a rosary of tulsi beads round his neck. He was a big, burly man, and his bold, roguish eyes were at variance with his sacred calling. In the hope of a story, I threw a silver coin into his bowl and said "Salaam Maharaj! Are you a Brahman of Pandharpur?" At the same time I drew a cigar case from my pocket and offered him a cigar. The anchorite's lips curved in a hesitating smile, which grew broader as he said, "Ah! the Sahib talks Marathi. He understands". Then, after a pause, he said, "I am not a Brahman, Sahib, I am a Gurav* from the temple at Atibaleshwar."

"You are a Gurav from Atibaleshwar," I repeated. "I know the temple there well. But what brings you here, Bhatji?"

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*Guravs are a Sudra caste who sweep the temple and keep them clean. They take no part in the worship of the god. That is for the Brahmans.

"It is a long story, Sahib," he replied, "but if you will sit down under yonder tree, where I have my staff and black buckskin, it may interest you to hear it." The anchorite led me to a tree some way down the stream. There he had built himself a clay stove, and there lay his cooking pots and bedding. The breeze from the river was cool, the shade was thick, and there was probably not a cosier or more secluded nook in all Pandharpur. At the same time it commanded a fine view of the anchorite's natural prey, the simple pious pilgrims who were flocking to Pandharpur. The anchorite pointed to a comfortable little mound and said "Apan basa" (be seated), and then, lighting my cheroot and enjoying its fumes, began his story.

"Until a little more than a year ago, I was, as I have said, one of the Guravs of Atibaleshwar. It is our duty, as you know, to sweep the temple floor and courtyard ; and until the monsoon before last, that was my life's work. But often in those terrible four months, when the never-ending rain pours down, I had often wished that I could leave Atibaleshwar and go and see the wide world outside. But I feared that if I did, I should be excluded from the temple on my return. One day, however, a cultivator of Jor unearthed a pot full of gold coins and ornaments that had belonged, so men said, to the More family of King Shivaji's time. This led to a great deal of trouble. We Guravs of Atibaleshwar had come to Jor because of the heavy rain, and we demanded and received a share of the treasure. The sub-inspector of police heard it, and, pretending to act on behalf of the Sarkar, came to Jor and made the villagers give their shares to him. The Guravs all entrusted me with their shares, and I hid in the woods. Then the Assistant Collector came and had the sub-inspector arrested. But I feared that I should also be arrested, so I went via Satara to Poona, and then to Bombay. When I had spent the money, I would have returned to Atibaleshwar for I was tired of sight-seeing. But I had spent the shares of the other Guravs as well as my own, so, instead of returning home, I went northwards from Poona to Khed. There is a temple at Khed, and a sacred pool where the villagers round about go and bathe, and I had the thought that I would make Khed as holy as Dnyandev made Alandi. The Sahib knows the story?"

"Yes", I said, "I know it well. The great saint buried himself alive at Alandi in the very spot which the Lord Krishna pointed out to him".

"Hoy, Sahib", (Yes; Sir) went on the anchorite, "and I, too, gave out that I would bury myself alive at Khed. I told this to the Brahmans, but at first they only laughed at me. But when I told them that they would profit much, in that pilgrims from Junnar and Nasik would go to Khed on the road to Pandharpur before they had given away all their money, they entered into my scheme. They went through the town saying that a very holy man had come and was about to bury himself alive to do honour to the Lord

Krishna. I went into an open space in the town and sat motionless as if in a trance. When men asked me why I had come, I said that the Lord Krishna had bidden me bury myself at Khed, just as Dnyandev had buried himself at Alandi ; and I added that the Lord Krishna had promised me that pilgrims who visited my grave on the thirteenth of the dark half of Kartik would gain as much merit as if they had that day visited the shrine of Dnyandev at Alandi.

"The news that I was going to bury myself like Dnyandev, and that Khed would thereafter become as holy as Alandi, spread through the town. All the youth of the place readily came forward to dig me a grave, and all the townspeople came to supply me with rich food in their gratitude that so great a saint should have deigned to sanctify their township."

Just then a band of well-to-do pilgrims started to cross the river in a ferry-boat. My friend the Gurav sprang to his feet and said, "Sahib, you must excuse me, I must enable those pilgrims to acquire merit by giving me alms."

With these words he would have left me, but I slipped a ten-rupee note into his begging-bowl and said, "Nay, Bhatji, you must finish your story."

The Gurav's eyes glittered when he saw the note, and blessing me, he said, "May you be rich and happy always, O incarnation of Yudhishthira!" Then he continued his story.

"It was then, Sahib, only the month of Bhadarpad (August). So all through Bhadarpad and Ashwin (September) the good people of Khed brought me milk and fruits and women gave me money for love philtres for their husbands and for charms and amulets for their children. In this way I collected nearly fifty rupees, and I wished to leave Khed and start a similar business in some other township. But when, one night, I thought of going, I found that the villagers had posted sentries all round the open space where I had camped. For it seems that some doubted my good faith, and all were determined that they would get their money's worth, and that, whether I liked it or not, I should take samadhi* in the grave that they had dug for me. Now it so chanced that the sub-inspector of police, a Brahman, had recently married a young wife. At first she came to me to buy a love philtre for her husband, who was chilled with age. But afterwards she came, because she grew to love me. The night following that of my attempted flight—for she used to slip out of her house after her evening meal—she noticed that I was more thoughtful than usual, and she asked the cause. I told her about the cruelty of the villagers, and I confessed to her that I had never meant to bury myself. I feared that on hearing this she would have turned and left me. But to my surprise, she threw her arms round my neck and wept with joy. "Beloved," she cried, "this is indeed good news. I feared so that I should lose you in a few days' time; and now I know

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**Samadhi ghenen* (to take *samadhi*) is the phrase used when a saint buries himself alive.

that we shall live together and be happy always!" Then we talked and plotted together; and at last she hit upon this plan. She would steal a sepoy's uniform from her husband's lines and, dressed in it, I would safely slip through the cordon which the villagers had drawn round me. This plan seemed to me excellent; but it was easier to make than to carry through. Evening after evening she came to me to say that she had failed to secure the sepoy's uniform, so strictly were strangers kept out of the lines. The bright half of Kartik came and went; then the first week of the dark half; then followed the 8th, 9th and 10th, and still the sub-inspector's wife had not brought me the sepoy's clothes. On the 11th the villagers fasted to purify themselves for my samadhi. On the 12th they broke their fast, and feasted in my honour; and I, too, had to join in their feast, although my tongue clove to my palate with fear; for unless I escaped that night, the next day would be my last. My grave had been dug eight feet deep, a black buck's skin had been spread over the bottom of it, and a stack of wood, the smoke of which was to stupefy me when the mouth of the grave was being closed, was piled up in a corner. Happily, the villagers did not expect gaiety from an anchorite ; so after they had feasted, they left me, confident that next day I should make their town holy for ever. But the sentries posted round me never relaxed their watch, and were as wakeful as ever. I could not sleep, such was my fear; always, too, I hoped against hope that the Brahman woman would come and save me. Nor did my hope prove false. Two hours after midnight I heard a voice whisper not far from me, "Maharaj ! I have come". I could see nothing, because, as you know, Sahib, the nights are moonless on the thirteenth of the dark half of the month. But I knew from the voice that it was the sub-inspector's wife. She had not been able to steal a sepoy's dress, so she had actually brought me her own husband's uniform covered with silver braid. I tore off my anchorite's robe, I slipped on the sub-inspector's uniform, and with a bold step I marched through the ring of sentries. The Brahman girl followed me, carrying my anchorite's gown tied up in a bundle. The villagers, thinking me to be the sub-inspector on his rounds, let us pass by them and out of the town. We walked as fast as we could for the rest of the night towards Bhimashankar, for I knew that the sub-inspector and the villagers would join in hunting us down. When the sun rose, I took off the uniform and, hiding it in a cavity in a dry torrent-bed, put on again my anchorite's gown. Then we hid in a little wood and rested there throughout the day. When darkness fell, we set out again and before morning we had reached the hills, and I knew that we were fairly safe. The Brahman girl had brought some food with her, and she bought some more from the hillmen's huts. Thus we had strength to make our way to one of the peaks of Bhimashanker, from which one can look down many hundred feet into the Konkan.

There we made ourselves a little hut and lived together as happily as ever Rama and Sita did on the banks of the Godavari. One day, however, the Brahman girl, on going to a neighbouring village, heard that the sub-inspector was still searching for us, and that in a day or two he and his sepoys would beat all the jungles on Bhimashankar. I knew then that if we stayed we should be taken, and I also knew that that rakshas (devil) of a sub-inspector would surely hand me over to the villagers of Khed to bury alive. I stormed and cursed myself for ever having left Atibaleshwar; and at last I told the Brahman girl that she must leave me and return to her husband. But, truly, Sahib, I had no inkling of what was to follow. I, indeed, thought only how to save myself. She threw herself at my feet and cried and implored me not to leave her, promising me that she would save me, as she had saved me before. But when fear has hold of a man, he will not listen to reason. Losing all patience, I pushed her violently from me and went to say my evening prayers; for at all times, Sahib, I have strictly observed the rites of our religion. Seeing that I would not yield, she rose to her feet and, salaaming, said bitterly, "Farewell, then, Maharaj. It has truly been said that a Sudra can never become a Brahman, even though he bathe in the Ganges." Then pulling her mantle forward over her head, she ran to the edge of the cliff and sprang into space. For some minutes I was too shocked to do anything, then I crept to the mountain's edge and looked over. At first I saw nothing; then I made out ever so far below me a red spot, which I knew to be the Brahman woman's clothes. I would have fled from the place at once, but it was growing dark and I had heard of a man-eating panther in the forest. So I stayed the night in my hut, covering my head carefully with my sheet; for I feared that the bodiless spirit of the Brahman girl might enter my mouth as I slept, and possessing me, bring me to ruin. Next morning I rose and, crept again to the edge of the cliff and saw the red spot untouched. The jackals had not found her in the night. But as I looked, I became aware of a black speck in the sky, and then another and then another and then another. I knew then that the vultures had seen her body, and that before evening they would have eaten it. I went back to my hut, and picking up my small belongings, ran as fast as I could from the accursed place. By great good fortune I escaped the toils laid for me by the sub-inspector, and I made my way northwards to Nasik. There I met a Brahman priest, who fed and cared for me like a father, and when he died of cholera, as he did two or three months later, he left me all his small savings. After mourning for him and burning his body and throwing his bones into the Godavari, I came here to worship the Lord Krishna."

"You were fortunate", I said, "in finding so kindly a priest. But I was at Nasik at the time, and I heard evil men say—for there are evil men even in so holy a place as Nasik—

that the old priest did not die of cholera, but because he ate arsenic by mistake".

In sheer malice, I had drawn a bow at a venture. It certainly seemed as if my random shaft hit the mark. All the good humour left the anchorite's face. He sprang to his feet, seized his iron shod staff, and for a moment I thought he would have struck me with it. " Nay, Bhatji", I spoke soothingly to him, " be not angry. I did but jest." But he was not to be cajoled. His pleasant garrulity had gone never to return.

Just then he spied another likely boat-load of pilgrims crossing the Bhima. He picked up his begging-bowl, threw away his cigar-end and growling under his breath, " Aanakhi gappa marayala mala kahi vel nahi " (I have no more time to waste gossiping here), he strode off towards his predestined prey. A minute or two later I heard his voice raised as before, half whining, half threatening.

" Alms, alms! In the name of God, give me alms!"

JIM RUSSELL'S UPCOUNTRY BRIEF

"Well, I must say I never heard of a more hopeless case"!

Jim Russell, seated in a first class carriage in the afternoon mail from Bombay to Poona, brought down a bundle of papers with a crash across his knee. He looked out of the window at the great masses of the Western Ghats, at the jungle along their shaggy sides, at the cascades leaping and falling into the gorge a thousand feet below. But although he looked at the wonders of the Sahyadris during the southwest monsoon, he saw them not. His thoughts were on the papers which he had just treated with such contumely. He was a young barrister, who had spent two years in Bombay, hoping for work that never came. Suddenly, he had been briefed to appear for the defence in a poisoning case in Belgaum, on a fee of three hundred rupees a day. The brief had come that morning and

Russell's presence was needed at once, as the case came on for hearing two days later.

He had packed up, got into the train the same afternoon and had been reading his brief, as only first briefs are read, for the last two hours.

There was certainly some excuse for Jim Russell's disappointment, for his client's case was about as weak as it could be. The client was a young Maratha woman named Sitabai ; and according to the Crown she had had a little love affair with a Brahman, the village accountant. Her husband had come to hear of it and had reprimanded her in the severe way, that husbands do reprimand their wives in India. The fair sinner had "eaten stick" until she was sore all over. She had gone to bed for a week; but although her bruises healed, her fury and hatred continued to burn at white heat against her husband. She bought some white arsenic from a wandering sadhu or anchorite and put a handful or so into the first meal that she cooked for her husband. An hour afterwards he was deadly sick and he died in agony before midnight. A couple of village dogs ate the vomited matter and also died in agony. The police seized the food prepared by the woman and sent it and the dead man's clothes and his intestines to the chemical analyser. He found quantities of arsenic in all of them. On the top of all, the woman made a detailed confession to the nearest first class magistrate, who recorded it in the most careful manner possible. Although Jim Russell poured over it for more than an hour, he could find not the slightest flaw in the procedure. By the time the train reached Poona, Russell's mind was made up. He would advise his client to plead guilty and throw herself on the mercy of the court. He would then ask the judge in view of her frank admission of guilt and of her sex to transport her for life instead of hanging her.

When the train stopped next morning at Belgaum station, Russell was met by the pleader briefed to instruct him. He was an old Chitpawan Brahman from Ratnagiri, who had somehow or other drifted up the Ghats.

"Well, Mr. Joshi", said Russell "The case is hopeless, is it not? I am going to advise our client to plead guilty and throw herself on the mercy of the court."

"Sahib, for Heaven's sake do nothing in haste" replied Mr. Joshi genuinely alarmed. "In the first place nothing on earth would induce Sitabai to plead guilty. In the second place, I can assure you, things are not so bad as they seem. If you read through the papers again, you will see that she withdrew her confession in the committing magistrate's court and said that the police had extorted it by cruel treatment. She will say this again before the sessions judge. That is your cue ; abuse the police ; say they have got up the case through malice and the jury will believe you. If the judge does not like their verdict, he will have to refer the case to the High Court. But I do not think he will refer it. In one or two cases referred by him lately, the High Court have refused to interfere. The judges have talked about the sanctity of the jury's verdict and the impropriety of setting it aside. The result is that James Sahib, our judge, is rather nervous about referring cases."

Russell laughed at this frank statement of the case by his colleague. In England when one has a bad case, one is supposed to abuse the other side's attorney. In India the time honoured practice is to abuse the police. "All right" said Russell cheerfully "I'll black-guard the police to your heart's content; but even so, Mr. Joshi, I do not see how we can win. Apart from the woman's confession, there is the chemical analyser's report, there is the complaint of the dead man's brother, made within an hour of the latter's death and then there is Sitabai's intrigue. Indeed about the only thing lacking is the evidence of the sadhu. He seems to have made himself scarce at once after selling Sitabai the arsenic. I suppose he saw trouble coming and wisely resolved not to wait for it. However, you know this sort of work a great deal better than I do, so I'll fight it."

While he had been speaking, Russell had been watching closely the pleader's face and had guessed that he knew more of the facts than he would own to, so he had decided to follow his advice.

The Belgaum sessions began with Russell's case and at 11 A.M. on the first Monday of the month the Court assembled. The Public Prosecutor "opened", stating his facts with the most convincing thoroughness and then called the deceased's brother. He was the main prop of the Crown's story. He should have proved the deceased's quarrel with the accused, her punishment followed by her husband's illness and death. He had also sworn in the lower court, that just before his death his brother had in his presence charged his wife with having put white powder into his food. In the Sessions court, however, the brother's tale was quite different from that told by him to the magistrate. Russell looked at Mr. Joshi and saw his face lit up with a happy smile. Russell could not make head or tale of it. In spite of shameless leading on the part of the Public Prosecutor, the deceased's brother would hardly give any evidence at all. At last he burst out that what he had said in the Lower Court was all false and that he had been forced by the police to tell a pack of lies. The Public Prosecutor had his previous evidence read out and then sat down. Russell did not cross-examine. There was no need to do so. The brother returned to the back of the court. Thereafter a procession of villagers went to the witness box and told the same story viz. that they had been tutored by the police, browbeaten by the police, tortured by the police, all to make them implicate the prisoner. At last the Inspector went into the box and tried manfully to stick to his guns. But he was so crestfallen at the complete breakdown of his carefully worked up case, that he made one or two stupid slips. Last of all Sitabai was examined by the judge. She repeated what she had said in the Lower Court about her extorted confession.

Russell called no witnesses and the

Public Prosecutor put the Crown case to the jury. He had little or nothing to put. He relied on the previous statements of the villagers, the police evidence and the chemical analyser's report. At this point the court rose for the day.

Russell had not yet acquired the happy faculty, which a lawyer in large practice gets of throwing off his cases, when he passes through the court doors. He hardly slept a wink that night, trying to get to the bottom of the mystery. Why should the sub-inspector try to get a wretched peasant woman hanged? After all, the brother had mentioned her name before the police had ever reached the village, so that even if she was convicted, the inspector would hardly earn any reputation as a detective. On the other hand if it was a true case, why should the dead man's brother and the other villagers turn round in the sessions court? By the time day dawned Russell had decided to ask Sitabai herself in the absence of the instructing pleader. He asked for leave to see her before the court assembled and asked the pleader's clerk to act as his interpreter. The judge made no difficulty and Russell was put into a room alone with his client and the pleader's clerk.

"Ask her" said Russell "what the true story is. I cannot defend her unless I know it."

The clerk interpreted the question and Sitabai--a pretty Maratha woman about twenty-three years old—answered it by another.

"Will the Sahib promise not to repeat what I say?"

"Yes" replied Russell "certainly. I promise solemnly."

"Well Sahib" said the woman as unconcernedly as possible "My husband was always troubling me. One day he would scold me, another day beat me, so what could I do? When the sadhu offered to sell me some arsenic, I was helpless. I bought it and put half the powder in my husband's food. So he died. I was arrested and the Sahib will now get me off."

That was enough for the young barrister.

He went to court a sadder and a wiser man. Although he had one of the best cases a man could have, he made the lamest speech imaginable. Whenever he tried to blame the inspector and hold up his client as the innocent victim of an evil plot, there came before his eyes the vision of Sitabai, saying "I put half the powder in my husband's food. So he died." He rambled on for about half an hour and sat down. The judge summed up and the jury without leaving the box found Sitabai not guilty. They added to their verdict a rider that the judge should report the inspector to the superintendent of police. The judge accepted the jury's verdict and discharged the accused.

Russell ought to have been satisfied with this result, but he still craved to solve the mystery. He could not rest until he had questioned the pleader. At first Mr. Joshi pretended he did not know, but at last Russell so worried him that he gave way. "As the Sahib *must* know" he said "this is what I have heard. The deceased was separate from his brother. In the absence of children the deceased's nearest heir was his wife.

" She promised the brother that if he would turn round in the sessions court, she would assign him half her husband's land. He agreed and not only turned round himself but got all the other villagers to do so, too."

"But if the woman had been hanged, the brother would have got it all " objected Russell.

"Yes, that is true, Sahib," answered the pleader " and this fact made the brother hesitate a long time. Then at my advice Sitabai engaged your services, for I had heard that you were a young man and therefore of a suitable age. I then told everyone that you were the sister's son of the Judge Sahib and Sitabai was sure to get off. This saying of mine got to the brother's ears, as I meant it should. In the end he feared she would be acquitted and inherit all the dead man's lands and that he would get nothing at all. So he agreed to her terms and the result you saw."

Russell felt perfectly disgusted with the pleader and told him so pretty frankly; but Mr. Joshi looked at him with unmoved face and said "Sahib, you are young and, if I may say so, inexperienced in our Indian ways. In a few years time you, too, will be thinking of clever devices like this one of mine and will thus get a big practice and become a rich man."

Russell was not without a sense of humour; but he was so provoked at the suggestion that he would in future years stoop to such roguery, that he threatened to report Mr. Joshi to the Chief Justice. "Nay Sahib" said Mr. Joshi in the suavest tones "That would be a foolish course and no pleader would ever brief you again. After all, it was you who forced me to tell you and I only told you because I trusted your honour. Has not one of our eastern poets said 'The hearts of the noble are the grave of secrets?'

Russell was so tickled at the callous

effrontery of the old Chitpawan that he burst into a fit of laughter. "Very well Mr. Joshi I shall say nothing. My noble heart shall be the grave of your secret." He returned to Bombay and like a wise man held his tongue. Nor did Mr. Joshi forget him and a number of appeals from Belgaum to the High Court came in due course, to prepare the way for a fine practice and a future judgeship.

Some years later Jim Russell met Mr. Joshi at the Poona railway station. After mutual recognition and a few polite enquiries on either side, Russell said to his companion "Well, Mr. Joshi, how is our friend Sitabai? have you seen her lately? I suppose she and the dead man's brother divided the poor husband's lands between them?"

"No indeed, Sahib" said Mr. Joshi "She was far too clever a woman for that. The day after the trial she adopted her sister's son, with the result that she divested herself of all the lands in his favour. As the adopted boy was only a few months old, she is still managing them on his behalf."

"But did not the husband's brother object?" asked Russell.

"Yes indeed he did Sahib" said Mr. Joshi. "He made a great *Ghadbad* (an awful row) about it. But Sitabai at my advice invited her sister's husband and his brother to live with her for some time after the adoption and they protected her against her brother-in-law. Besides Sitabai sent him a message that she had still half of the sadhu's powder left and that if he gave her any more trouble, she would put it into his plate just as she had put the first half into his brother's. After hearing this, he got frightened and ceased to harass her."

"By Jove" said Russell "she was a damned clever woman."

"Yes indeed," said Mr. Joshi with a knowing shake of the head and a most infectious chuckle "She was, as you say, a damned clever woman."

THE BEGGAR WOMAN OF PANDHARPUR

I had gone one morning a mile or so out of Pandharpur to a small hill locally known as Mount Govardhan. At the foot of it was a small temple. In front of the temple a Brahman priest was telling some tourists from Bombay the story of Shri Krishna and Mount Govardhan. " Shri Krishna" said the guide "came to Pandharpur in this way. He had once when at Mathura called from the dead his beloved mistress Radha and seated her on his lap. His queen Rukmani found them together and in a fit of jealous temper ran away to Pandharpur. Shri Krishna followed her accompanied by his herd boys and milking maids and Mount Govardhan. They traced Rukmani to this spot, which was then the border of a dense wood. Here Shri Krishna left his followers and went alone in search of Rukmani. He found her in the wood and with her went to Pundalik's house. As you know, Pundalik threw him a brick to stand on and eventually built him the temple, which you saw on coming to Pandharpur. Shri Krishna's followers went back to Mathura, all save Mount Govardhan; that remained rooted to this place.

Here the guide paused and a gurav* woman who was seated close to him, began singing to the accompaniment of a wooden club in an earthen pot; a song supposed to be one of those sung by the milking maids who loved Krishna. The first verse ran something like this :—

" Nanda's son, Nareissus eyed,
Churn, churn, churn !
Call me, call me to thy side !
Churn, churn, churn !

When may maid and master meet ?
I would kiss thy lotus feet.
I am sick with longing, sweet.
Churn, churn, churn !"

S. Harindas Pand [illegible]
1st year

---

*A caste that serves in the temple.

At this point a hungry looking beggar woman came near the tourists. Her face was lined with suffering and want ; her rags hardly hid her nakedness. Yet in spite of her sorry garb, she bore herself with a certain dignity. As she held out her hand for alms, the Brahman turned on her and raised his stick as if to beat her. At the same time he heaped abuse on her, of which the epithets "Apavitra!" (unchaste) and "rand!" (harlot) were the least objectionable.

The beggar woman shrunk away as if the words burnt her and the tourists after giving her a scornful glance, turned again to listen to the gurav woman's song.

I was struck with the beggar woman's bearing and going after her, I gave her a piece of silver. She joined her two hands and put them to her forehead by way of acknowledgment ; "Sahib, mala arzi karayachi ahe" (I have a petition to make, Sir).

"Well what is it?" I asked rather impatiently. I fancied that she wanted me to give her son a post in my office and

I did not think it likely that the son of a ragged, beggar woman, no matter how dignified, would be in any way qualified.

"Will the Sahib be so good as to get the priests of Krishna's temple to let me go inside the courtyard? I am a Maratha. I am not an outcaste."

"Well," I said rather taken aback "I shall do my best, but I am a Mlenccha (non-Hindu) and they will hardly heed me."

"The Sahib is no doubt a Mlenccha" replied the beggar woman "still the Brahmans know the Sahib and they may let me in as a favour to him."

"But why will they not let you in?" I asked more puzzled than ever.

"I cannot tell the Sahib now; I am too hungry. I have eaten nothing since yesterday morning. But if you will send for me later, after I have bought some food with the alms that you have so kindly given me, I shall tell you and then you will judge best what steps to take."

"Come at five this evening to the rest

house and tell me your story" I said and the beggar woman walked to an eating house to get some food.

At five o'clock as I was having my tea in the verandah of the rest house, the beggar woman duly appeared. I bade her sit down. Gathering her rags about her so that they might cover her decently, she sat down outside the verandah and began.

"Sahib, my name is Tapi and I am a beggar woman as you see and the sorriest of beggar women, for no one will give me food or alms ; yet my father was the patil (headman) of P. in the Ahmadnagar district. He married me when I was a child to a distant cousin who lived three villages off ; and when I was fifteen I went to live in his house. Although he was much older than I was, I should have worshipped him even as Sita worshipped Rama, had he treated me kindly. But he never cared for me. All his thoughts were for a Musulman dancing girl who lived in the Taluka town. He gave all our money to her and neither I nor his mother ever had proper clothes or indeed enough food. His mother tried to wean him from his folly. But he would not listen to her and then his mother blamed me. She said it was all my fault, because I was ugly and stupid and so could not win him from the claws of the Musulman harlot. At last I got to hate both my husband and his mother and as young women will, when they are unhappy at home, I began to look about for someone to console me. Now there was a young barber, Kalu by name, who lived in the village. Barbers are allowed to go about with greater freedom than other men. They shave our menfolk and at the same time are deemed so low that no Maratha woman, it is thought, would stoop to misconduct herself with a barber. But when men and women are young, Sahib, as you doubtless know, love sometimes makes them laugh at caste and I, neglected by my husband and illtreated by his mother. began to look with interest on the barber Kalu. He was young and, as it seemed to me, handsome ; and in spite of his lowly caste, I soon found myself making signs to him to attract his notice. At first he paid no heed to me, for he did not dare think that a woman of a patilki family would let her glance rest on a wretched barber, such as he was. But at last he could not help seeing that I looked on him with favour. So honoured was he by my condescension, that he fell at once in love with me. One day when my husband was away in his field and my mother-in-law had gone to gossip with a neighbour and tell her all about my laziness and my failure to win my husband's love, Kalu threw himself at my feet and told me that he loved me, that he worshipped me even as Parvati had worshipped Maheshwar.*" The beggar woman paused for a moment. No doubt in her mind's eye she saw her lover at her feet.

"At first" she continued a few seconds later "I pretended to be shocked at his presumption, but after a few minutes I began to smile at him and in the end I promised to meet him that evening near the river, after we had eaten our evening meal. That night I went out alleging some private business and as I had come out for that and for no other purpose, it was not long before he was my lover and I was his mistress. At first no one suspected anything, but in a village there are always a thousand eyes watching to catch the sinner in his sin. In time tongues began to wag merrily. The dhobi's little girl Narmada had seen us together in such and such a wood. The blacksmith's wife Saraswati had seen us exchange a word, as I was carrying from the river my jars full of water. Soon the rumour reached my mother-in-law's ears and she and my husband began to watch us. One evening Kalu and I were caught laughing and talking together. My husband and his two brothers set on Kalu and beat him senseless with their sticks. Then my husband took me home and tying me to a pillar, made his mother strip me naked and flog me until she was tired.

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* A name for the God Shiva.

I was thoroughly frightened and I did not wish ever again to see Kalu. Nor did I see him again for two or three months, as he did not get over his beating till then. Even after that when I met him, I kept my eyes on the ground for fear they should meet his. For six months I was faithful to my husband. Then one evening Kalu came to our house when I was alone and pleaded with me so passionately to give him one more meeting that I weakly yielded. Of course, as the Sahib will guess if he has ever been in love, the one meeting soon became two and the two meetings several dozen and once again our conduct came to my husband's knowledge. He again tied me up to the pillar, but this time he did the beating himself and he flogged me until I fainted. Next evening although I was so sore that I could hardly walk, he ordered me to go with him to the river bed. When I asked why, he answered with a bitter laugh 'so that I may marry you to Kalu.' I grew cold all over, for I knew that he meant to kill Kalu and very likely me also. However, there was no escape and I walked behind my husband while two of his brothers walked some little way after me, in case I tried to escape. My husband led me to a thick coppice, where I had often had stolen meetings with Kalu; there he and his two brothers waited for an hour or so. Suddenly my blood froze in my veins, for I heard Kalu's footsteps coming nearer and nearer. So did my husband and his brothers. The brothers gripped their 'lathis'* more tightly and my husband threw his turban over my face and tied it round my mouth, for fear I should scream and so warn Kalu.

"But why had he come?" I asked.

"I learnt afterwards, Sahib, that they had sent him a lying message by a village Mhar woman, (who had once or twice taken messages to him from me), that I wanted him in the coppice by the river. He fell into the trap and came. As he came nearer, my two brothers-in-law rose to their feet and as Kalu entered the little wood, they sprang on him. He was taken by surprise; besides they were big powerful men, each of whom was stronger and heavier than Kalu; so they soon overcame him and tying him up with their turbans and his own carried him into the middle of the river bed. Next my husband dragged me out and after jeering at us cruelly for some time, the three brothers pretended to marry me to Kalu. They repeated some ribald words which they said were marriage "mantras;"* then they seated me on Kalu's lap and poured abuse on our heads. This they said was their marriage blessing. By this time they were getting tired of their cruel jest and were ready to take their revenge in earnest. They threw Kalu on his back and kicked and beat him until every bone in his body must have been broken. But he was still alive, for I could hear him groaning and muttering faintly "Bapre! Bapre!"; so to finish him my husband took a penknife and drove it through his two eyes in turn into his brain. After this he did not groan any more and my husband and brothers turned to me and would, I think, have treated me likewise. They certainly kicked and beat me, until I all but fainted.

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* Wooden clubs.

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*Holy Sayings.

Suddenly a couple of policemen from the police post in the village came running up. They had been going their rounds and hearing screams had run up. My husband and his brothers seeing the policemen ran away, leaving me by Kalu's dead body. The policemen came up and getting a village cot, carried me to the police post where the Head Constable took my statement. Next day the Head Constable went with me to the nearest magistrate, who also took it down. Afterwards the magistrate warned me that the Sarkar would prosecute my husband and that I was to tell to the committing magistrate and the judge Sahib what I had told him or I should be punished for telling lies. The police kept me in their custody for six or seven weeks, so I do not know what they did. But they must have arrested my husband and his brothers ; for one day they took me to the camp of the magistrate. There I saw my husband and his brothers with handcuffs on and regardless of their fierce looks, I told the Sahib everything that had happened. I was so angry that I did not care who knew my shame, so long as the Sarkar hanged my three tormentors. Then the police must have thought that I was safe to tell the same story to the sessions judge and they let me go. This was very foolish of them, because I had to go back to my own village. Directly I did so my husband's cousins caught me and warned me that they would torture me to death even as Kalu had been tortured, unless when my husband was tried by the judge Sahib, I went back on what I had said to the magistrate. I was torn between a wish for revenge and the fear of pain and death ; and fear won the day. When I was taken into court, I told the judge that the police had beaten me and forced me to tell the magistrate a lot of lies. Then the judge made his clerk read out what the magistrate had recorded and the whole court—it was packed with people—listened to the story that I had told in the Lower Court ; and I nearly died of shame and terror. Next the government pleader asked me questions until at last I fainted and fell out of the witness box. When I recovered consciousness, I was in a cart and my husband's cousins were taking me to my village.

" Were your husband and his brothers hanged ? " I asked.

" No Sahib " she answered " I was the only eyewitness and when I had turned round, there was no other evidence except the two policemen. It seems they were dull, stupid men and broke down, when my husband's pleader cross examined them. The judge did not believe them and set my husband and his brothers free."

" When your husband returned home, did he treat you well ? "

"Indeed, he did not, Sahib " answered the beggar woman. " He made me the drudge of the house. He married another wife and from morning to night I was abused and beaten, until I often envied Kalu his torments ; for they at any rate had ended in death. At last one day my husband got a chill which went to his lungs and he died.

Then I thought that I should at last have peace. My husband had separated from his brothers and I and my co-wife were entitled to succeed to his lands during our lifetime. But I must have done some great wickedness in a former life, for I was not to know peace in this one. My brothers-in-law denied that they had ever separated. " Our brother was joint with us at his death" they said and they claimed his property. "His two widows are entitled only to maintenance."

" But did not your co-wife help you ?" I interposed " she was as much interested as you were."

"No Sahib" the beggar woman explained " it was all a plot. They had secretly promised her half my husband's property–which was all she could have got anyway––if she would help them against me. As she hated me, she agreed to do so. Then I resolved to run away, for to live on in my brother-in-law's house was only to remain on in misery. One night two or three years ago I ran away and I have lived by begging ever since. A few days ago I came to Pandharpur, but some one here must have heard my story and told it to the Brahmans. For whenever I ask for alms, they drive me away, as you saw."

"But what is it you want me to do?" I asked.

"I want you" she replied "to get the Brahmans to let me into Krishna's temple. I am sick of life and I think that if I went and threw myself at Shri Krishna's feet, he would take pity on me and release me from life. I have often tried to go into the courtyard of the temple, but the priests drive me out, saying I am impure and will defile the god. But, Sahib, as you know, that is nonsense. Shri Krishna was not defiled when the Mhar Chokhamela embraced him. The Ganges is not defiled even if a Mang* bathe in its waters."

"Wait for me at Shri Krishna's temple" I replied for I pitied the woman's earnestness "But I have little hope that I will succeed."

"Tari khatpat kara" (Still try your best) said the beggar woman and walked away towards the town.

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* A Mang is an even lower caste than a Mhar.

Half an hour later I followed her and going to the outer gate of the great temple, I saw her standing a few paces away. I motioned to her to stay where she was, then I began talking to one of the priests. After a few minutes' desultory talk, I said "Show me the tree that grew out of Kanhopatra's heart." He did so. Then I said "Tell me the story, I have rather forgotten it." "Yes, Sahib, I will gladly" said the priest. "Kanhopatra was a Musulman dancing girl, who grew tired of her life and came here to worship Krishna. But her beauty was such that the news of it reached the king of Bedar and he sent for her. She did not want to go back to a life of sin, so she prayed to the Lord Krishna to take her to himself and he did so. When the king's Musulman sepoys came to fetch her, they found her dead body lying in the courtyard and when the priests buried her body, the tree that you see grew out of her heart."

"Thank you" I said "for the story; and now tell me, pray, why you will not let that beggar woman yonder enter the temple."

"But Sahib" said the priest "she is a wicked harlot. I hear she deceived her husband with a barber."

"Bhatji"* I answered "you are very hard on her. Kanhopatra was a Mlenccha, she is a Maratha. Kanhopatra committed a thousand sins, she only sinned once. If Shri Krishna could forgive Kanhopatra, why should he not forgive her also?"

The Brahman was silent, seeing that the psychological moment had arrived, I stuffed some paper money into his hand and going to the gateway beckoned to the beggar woman to enter. She did so and going straight up to Krishna's idol fell at his feet. There I left her, merely saying to the Brahman priest "As a favour to me, Bhatji, let her be; whatever her sins may have been, she has repented of them and Shri Krishna will pardon her."

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* A courteous name for a priest.

"Very well" said the Brahman rather doubtfully and I left him.

Next morning I went back to Krishna's temple to ask what had happened to my friend the beggar woman. At the outer gate I met the Brahman priest in a state of great excitement. "The Sahib was right; the Sahib was right" he repeated "Shri Krishna has taken the beggar woman to himself. Come with me." In his excitement he forgot that I was a Mlenccha and he took me right upto the idol of the god. Lying in front of its feet was the beggar woman. She was dead, but the look of suffering had passed from her features and a happy smile had taken its place.

"See" said the Brahman "see how she smiles. She must have seen Shri Krishna himself. When I left the temple last night, I told her to leave it also, but she would not; and when I tried to drag her away, she began to scream and rave like a mad woman, saying that she would stay at Krishna's feet until he himself came to take her. Remembering my promise to you, Sahib, I left her. This morning I found her dead and looking like this. Shri Krishna must have answered her prayers and taken her soul to himself, even as Bhima takes to herself a rivulet and the Ocean gathers to himself the Ganges."

Whether the Brahman spoke the truth or not, I cannot say, but there was no doubt but that the poor beggar woman had found peace at last.

THE JUDGE'S STORY.

" Before you go to bed, Sherwell, you must tell us a story. In your thirty years as a judge you must have come across some strange romances."

" Yes " answered the judge after a moment's thought, " still one of the strangest dramas that ever came to my knowledge, happened outside my court."

" O you must tell it to us " said everyone in hearing; for it was guest night at the Western India Club in Poona and though it was past midnight, the diners were loth to leave.

" Well, then, here goes", said Sherwell. "You probably remember I was at A—the year they murdered poor B. and things were very bad there. If a European went into the city, he was hooted at and insulted. If he drove in a dog cart along the roads, the bullock cartmen would try and upset him by placing their carts crosswise in front of him. I, as judge, was more or less outside the struggle between the executive and the seditionists. As you fellows know, too, I have been always rather keen on Marathi and have studied the Marathas' ways and customs, so I was more or less excepted from the general execration. Priests used to come and chat with me about the affairs of their temples; pleaders used to come and warn me about possible plots; pilgrims on their way to the sacred shrines round about used to drop in and tell me tales of the saint Dnyandev and his brethren. I used in return to tell them, much to their edification, that a little stream which I had turned into my garden was the long-lost Saraswati, which I had brought back to earth by my penances. Of all my visitors the one who interested me most was a Chitpawan pleader called Pandit. He very frequently dropped in of an evening after his court work was over and would stay for an hour or so criticising the British administration, abusing European customs and morals and dilating for my benefit on the incomparable virtues of ancient Indians and the divine powers of the 'rishis' or wizards of old times. One day he came with a visitor who, so he informed me, was the reincarnation of the "rishi" Agastya who, many thousand years ago, crossed the Vindhyas by the simple device of flattening them out. I have forgotten what the reincarnation's real name was; indeed I am not sure that Pandit ever told it to me. He always spoke of him as the Rajyogi or the king of 'yogis', or anchorites. I was not very charmed with the visitor. He had a pair of roving, cunning eyes, deeply set in a haggard, dissipated face. His manner was too elaborate even for a Brahman's. He simply fawned on me and taking quite a different view from Pandit's, said that the King Emperor was the incarnation of the god Vishnu, just as he himself was a reincarnation of the 'rishi' Agastya. I asked Pandit to explain the difference in their views, but he replied airily, 'The Rajyogi, Sahib, is a child in politics. He has no time to think of them. He is immersed in the study of the moral law. In a few years' time he will be re-absorbed in the divine essence, so he has no time to waste on the things of this world. He is to teach me various exercises by which I can attain to "yog" or spiritual supremacy. Having attained to it, I shall, so he tells me, be able with my curses to burn up the Collector and the Superintendent of Police (both of whom he hated virulently) 'just as Vishvamitra* would do, were he now alive.'

"I was much amused, although I succeeded in not smiling. It seemed to me that if the Rajyogi had had these wonderful powers, he would have put them to some practical use, instead of passing them on to Mr. Pandit, in return for mere board and lodging. Shortly afterwards Mr. Pandit went away, taking the Rajyogi with him. He returned alone often after that and he was always full of the wonderful exercises taught him by the Rajyogi. He used to lie flat on the ground and lift himself up without bending his knees, a hundred times morning and evening. He used to breathe out of each nostril alternately, while with his arms he performed some complicated gymnastics round his head. He used to recite "Mantras" or holy sayings, while he reflected on the various aspects of the Divine Being. At last I began to be genuinely anxious about him. In the first place he had got dreadfully thin. The Rajyogi had made him reduce his food to the lowest possible limit. This was, so Mr. Pandit told me, 'to purify his evil body of carnal desires and thus make more room for spiritual influences.' At the same time that he was starving himself and going through these various exercises, he was trying to carry on an extensive legal practice and to take a leading part in local politics. He was thus rapidly killing himself and his eyes had already a wild look in them. As an old acquaintance, I remonstrated with him and told him that his penances were excessive. He should do nothing over much. He was still young and he had lots of time before him to do his exercises slowly and reach beatification, or whatever he sought, before death claimed him. But my words were thrown away. Mr. Pandit would not go slowly. He wanted to be a saint all at once. If he waited too long, the Collector and the Police Superintendent might retire to England and so escape him. He insisted, moreover, that he was gaining strength, not losing it. He had shed all his carnal desires. His wife had become a sister to him, and freed from these desires, he was able to concentrate his mind better on legal problems and to gain a clearer insight into India's political needs. Well, it was none of my business; but I could not help thinking that his poor wife might also have something to say on the subject and I hinted as much. It was a great discourtesy on my part, as, even among Hindus, it is not usual to talk about their wives. But Pandit took it quite well, saying that Brahman women were not filled with desire as other women were and that she, too, had derived enormous spiritual benefit from the teaching of the Rajyogi.

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* A famous Indian "rishi" or wizard, well-known for his awful temper.

"One day Mr. Pandit came and told me that he had advanced so far in the spiritual path that the Rajyogi had directed him to sit for four hours every day on the roof and perform his exercises there, that all the world might know the saintliness of the Rajyogi's pupil. Mr. Pandit was childishly pleased, not only at his advance in spiritual matters, but at the publicity that was to be given to him. I was exasperated when I heard of this new turn, for I felt certain that the Rajyogi was up to no good.

"Pardon me a thousand times, Mr. Pandit", I said, "but are you sure that this reincarnation of Agastya is really an honest man? Are you sure that while you are up above on the roof, he is not poking his nose into your accounts or your legal papers or picking the lock of your cash-box?" I did not dare add what I really did suspect, namely, that the Rajyogi might be stealing away the heart of Mrs. Pandit, a young and buxom woman whom I knew by sight.

"Oh no, Sahib!" replied Mr. Pandit, with a pitying smile, "you are confounding the firefly with the sun, the puddle with the Ganges?" Then he fell again to describing the new exercises that he had been given to do, and the firm hope that he cherished of speedily burning up the Collector and the Police Superintendent, whose evil and tyrannical acts were, according to Mr. Pandit, rapidly mounting up as high as Mount Meru. Mr. Pandit did not reappear until about a week later. I was just sitting down to tea preparatory to a game of golf, when I saw him enter my garden gate. At first I did not recognise him. He no longer bore himself in the proud way that befitted a man, who had the leading practice in the civil courts and hoped soon to reduce to ashes the Collector and the Police Superintendent. He slunk in as if all the troubles of the world were on his shoulders. His arrogance had vanished as a cheetul's does when it sheds its horns; and he was as draggle-tailed as the jackdaw of Rheims was, when the Archbishop's curse had got really home. His eyes were sunken into great pits in his face ; his back was bent double and I could see that only the greatest effort saved him from bursting into tears, the moment he saw me.

"My poor friend", I said, genuinely grieved at the man's wretched plight ; "what *has* happened to you? Is the Rajyogi displeased with your progress in spiritual science?"

"Sahib!" cried Mr. Pandit. "Don't in Heaven's name mention that villain in my presence!" and then he broke into some unspeakably foul abuse of the reincarnation of Agastya.

"Why, good gracious, what is the matter?" I asked.

"Send the peons away," replied Mr. Pandit, "One of them knows English—and I shall try to tell you the awful calamity that has fallen on my house!"

I sent the peons away and encouraged Mr. Pandit to unburden himself. It was a very long tale as he told it ; but the long and the short of it was this. When I had spoken to Mr. Pandit of possible wickedness on the part of the Rajyogi, he had treated my words with contempt. Nevertheless, as words do sometimes, they had slowly sunk into his mind and he did not forget them. One day, when he was up on the roof performing his ridiculous exercises in sight of an admiring crowd, a smart shower fell—it was August—and the crowd dispersed. He himself stayed on, for the Rajyogi had told him never to leave his post, wet or dry; for to show oneself sensitive to the elements meant pitiful failure to rise above worldly feelings. Nevertheless, wet to the skin and chilled by the wind, he found himself unable fully to concentrate his thoughts on the Divine Essence. Then my words recurred to him and he began to think 'What if the Rajyogi is trying to steal my money or steal my clients' secrets? What if he is a spy of the Criminal Investigation Department?' Then the awful thought came to him, that only the day before a Bengali anarchist in the garb of a yellow-robed pilgrim had brought him fifty poisonously seditious pamphlets to distribute. If they fell into the hands of the Rajyogi and he handed them over to his enemy the terrible Collector, he (Mr. Pandit) would get two years' rigorous imprisonment at the very least. A moment later he had risen to his feet and was slinking down the steps of his house as noiselessly as a panther, picking its way through the loose stones in a river bed.

"He passed through the outer verandah and into the sitting room. There he saw and counted his seditious pamphlets. They were untouched. Then he wondered where the Rajyogi was, for he ought to have been studying Sanskrit treatises in the sitting-room. His wife was also neither in the kitchen cooking, nor asleep in her bedroom. He looked into the god-room and the water room. Suddenly he opened the door of the Rajyogi's room and inside he saw to his horror his wife in the arms of the Rajyogi. Mr. Pandit gave a great cry and staggered backwards. The Rajyogi would have made some miserable excuses, but Mrs. Pandit turned furiously on her husband and said that it was all his fault for neglecting her in this world, in order to secure his own happiness in some future life. 'Besides,' she added, with a snort, 'you told me to follow the teaching of this reincarnation of Agastya, and now you blame me because I have done so.'

Stung to the quick by his wife's sarcasm, he rushed at her, but the Rajyogi intervened. As for weeks past the saint had been feeding himself up, while Mr. Pandit had been starving himself and exposing himself on the roof, Agastya's incarnation soon overcame the wretched husband. Pushing him out of the house, he closed the outer door, and shouted to him to drown himself as a "Yogbrasht," or one who has tried to attain spiritual perfection but has failed in the attempt.

"The wretched man tried for some time to force his way back into the house, alternately besieging the doors and windows with threats and entreaties. At last he resolved to come to me and ask me what he should do.

He, himself, was for taking an overdose of opium. But I soothed and dissuaded him and made him sit down while I had tea. He was too strict a Hindu to join me, but he was, I think, genuinely grateful for my sympathy. I had then to leave him, to play a round of golf with a friend ; but I promised to come back at once the game was over and Mr. Pandit promised to await my return in the verandah, and to discuss some way of punishing or at any rate of expelling the Rajyogi. I played a disgraceful round, as all the time I was thinking of my poor friend, Mr. Pandit. After losing 5 up and 4 to play I ran back home, only to find that my friend had gone. At first the peons would not explain, but at last I learnt from an old Musulman Naik, that the peon who knew English had crawled back into the house and had overheard Mr. Pandit's story. Bubbling over with joy, he had crawled back and told the other peons and all the servants. Directly I had gone, the servants had crowded into the house to peep at the unhappy victim of domestic treachery. Then one of the peons had said to my dressing boy "How wonderful indeed is this Brahman! He was going to overthrow the British empire and yet he could not keep his own wife in order!" On this gibe followed a peal of scornful laughter, for Mr. Pandit, as an arrogant Brahman, was not popular with the Maratha peons or the low caste servants. The wretched man gave a cry as if he had been shot, and jumping to his feet, he ran out of my garden as hard as he could.

"What happened to him then?" asked one of the judge's hearers, as Sherwell paused for a moment.

"Well, I don't know exactly. All I can say is that he was drowned in the river that runs a mile or two from P—, but whether he threw himself in or the "Jaldevatas" got him, do not know".

"Good gracious, what are "Jaldevatas?" asked the former speaker. "Are they a sort of crocodile?"

"No; they are the water goddesses who

as the Hindus believe, dwell in every river and lake. You will probably laugh at me if I say, that I am by no means sure that the Hindus are wrong. I remember one day looking over the parapet of a low bridge, into a river running in high flood. I looked for a time at the ripples that formed, broke and reformed a few feet below me. Gradually it seemed to me that the edges of the ripples grew rounder and softer. Then a little hand came up for a moment and vanished. By degrees all the ripples turned into tiny heads of little fairy-like people, who bobbed up and down smiling at me and beckoning to me to join them. I bent forward to see whether there were others under the bridge; but I could not see any there, although in the open stream there seemed to be scores of the prettiest little faces in the world, all smiling to each other and pointing and nodding towards me. Then one seemed to say to the others 'I am sure he will come, if I give him my hand.' She rose half out of the water and reached a tiny hand up towards mine. The fingers were so beautifully shaped that I felt I must reach out and touch them. I stooped right over and in another moment I should have done so, when my companion suddenly caught me by the coat tails and hauled me back, saying sharply 'what the devil are you doing, Sherwell? In another second you would have been in the river!' Something of the same kind may have happened to poor old Pandit. Afterwards I learnt that he had been sitting about five o'clock in the evening on the edge of the river wall and that he had gradually leaned forward and toppled over into the stream, then racing almost a mile wide towards the sea. Anyway he was drowned and his body was washed to the bank a league down stream".

Sherwell had told the last part of the story so earnestly, that none of his hearers even smiled. At length one said " Have you any idea what happened to the Rajyogi and Mrs. Pandit ?"

" Curiously enough I do know something ", said Sherwell, " although I hardly expected ever to hear of them again. Two years later I was transferred to Sholapur and went to Pandharpur to inspect a sub-court. One evening the priests of Rama's temple there asked me to be present next day, as they were opening a new covered courtyard to the temple, built at the cost of a pious widow. I accepted, and at five o'clock I went from the rest house to Rama's temple. The chief priest received me very kindly, and introduced me to the other priests. The last one said with a genial smile "The Sahib knows me. I had the honour of meeting him at A—two or three years ago". It was my friend the Rajyogi! but he had no longer any of his old leanness. He looked sleek and fat and prosperous beyond belief. I shook him by the hand, for there was no resisting the cordiality of the rascal's manner. He then told me in the most unctuous tones, that to commemorate the incomparable virtues and penances of her late husband, Mrs. Pandit had resolved to spend the bulk of her wealth in building a covered courtyard and in giving two lacs of rupees as an endowment to the temple. With a slight gesture of his hand, he showed me a little way off a female figure in a saffron robe, her face and her shaven head covered by the fold of her sari. The Rajyogi, it seems, was a Brahman priest of Rama's temple; but for an indiscretion with some local lady he had been turned out shortly before I first saw him. He had made his way to A—and with wits sharpened by hunger, he had managed to fool poor Pandit. When he had returned to Pandharpur with a rich widow to be their prey, the priests forgave him; and when I saw him the second time, he was once more in his old place.

" What happened to the widow ?" asked one of Sherwell's friends. " I know nothing more about either of them", said Sherwell, " but I should say she had a bad time of it. The Rajyogi was the last person to whom I would have cared to entrust my life's happiness ".

THE SECRETARY'S STORY.

"I say, Smith, cannot you cap that tale with some story from your benighted Presidency? I am sure some of your tiger stories are tall enough for anything."

The occasion of this question was an anecdote told in the red dining room of a club in a well known Indian hill station. From the walls oil paintings of military heroes looked down on a scene, in which they had all once taken part. Those who sat at the small tables scattered about the room, were with one exception Anglo Indian officials. The exception was the narrator of the anecdote, the representative of a Danish firm. At first he had sat very quiet, barely answering the questions put to him by his host. But as dinner progressed, so did he. As he drank his third glass of port, he told his fellow guests that in America, where he had lived for many years, he had earned the name of "Alligator

Joe." He then narrated how on one occasion he had killed a notorious man eating alligator by shooting it through both nostrils with "S S." shot. He told the story well with many gestures and effective pauses and it ended amid applause.

"I won't bore you fellows with a tiger story at this time of night" laughed Smith, "but I remember a case that happened down our way, when I was in the secretariat. It may interest you."

"Capital" said the host, "Go ahead."

"Well," said Smith. "Some years ago I was judicial secretary to the M—Government. I had above me as judicial member an Indian gentleman, who had for a short time acted as judge of the High Court; and although he never got a permanent judgeship, he always thought himself a better lawyer than the gentlemen who did. He was, therefore, for ever interfering with the decisions of their Lordships; and they, as time went on, got more and more restive. One day a curious case came up before Government. Two young married women lived in the same village in an outlying district. They were either cousins or sisters and they had married two kinsmen. They were very anxious to have children. Their husbands were a good deal older than they were and they feared with justice that if they were left childless widows, they would have a very bad time of it. They had been married for three years and no hope of a child had been vouchsafed to either of them. So they decided to take counsel of an up country anchorite, who had come to their village and was halting there, until he had exhausted the patience and the charity of the villagers. The anchorite listened gravely to their story and took their small fee. He then told them that a sure way to get children was to sacrifice a girl child of three to the earth goddess, and he hinted that the headman of the village had just such a little girl. It seems that the anchorite had a spite against the headman, because the latter had refused him alms and had twice told him to quit the village. To gratify his spite, he prompted the two women to kill the child. They knew nothing of the fiend's evil motive and thought only how to get the babies they so badly wanted. That afternoon they bought some sweetmeats and with them tempted the little girl to go with them to a sunken river bed. There they strangled her. They put a few marigold flowers over her body, buried her in the sand and burnt over her two sticks of incense, to shew the earth goddess that the deed had been done in her honour. Then they went home in the full and blissful confidence that in less than a year's time they would be mothers.

This happy state of mind did not last long. The headman missed his daughter, searched the village for her, and then made enquiries. A number of people had seen the two women take the girl away with them, so they were called upon to say where she was. After a few feeble attempts at denial, they made a clean breast of everything. The headman sent for the police and they arrested both the women and the anchorite. In the end all three were committed to take their trial. In the Sessions Court the two women stuck to their confessions, were found guilty and sentenced to death. The blackguardly anchorite denied everything stoutly, and as there was no evidence against him except the confessions of the co-accused, he was acquitted.

The two women appealed to the High Court, who reduced their sentences to transportation for life. Ordinarily the matter would have rested there and the good ladies would have been sent off to the Andaman Islands, to spend the next twenty years in the establishments provided by the Indian Government for such as them. But as bad luck would have it, the papers had reported the case and it had aroused the interest of the judicial member. He made me send at once for the papers. On their arrival he read them through ravenously, and looking at the ladies' case from a purely Indian point of view, he came to the conclusion that their offence was a very venial one. Indeed I am not sure that he did not minute that had he been they, he would have acted just as they had done. Any way, he reduced their life sentences to three months each. The High Court were furious, still they said nothing. But the hour of their revenge was not long in striking.

When the villagers heard that the two women's sentences had been reduced to three months, they could not make it out at all. At last one wiseacre started the rumour that the Government in view of its great losses in the war then raging, wanted everyone to have boy babies. Ordinarily in the M—Presidency wives are chaste enough, but widows are not expected to be so strict, and the result of this rumour was that within a year several widows had babies, and they successfully silenced their critics by saying that they were carrying out the Government's wishes. But the climax came when an old woman who had long passed the childbearing age, formed a strange desire to have a baby. She thought and thought over the story of the two young women who had killed the little girl in order to get children, and wondered whether their remedy would have any effect. As ill luck would have it, they both did have babies within a few months after their release, but whether this was due to their sacrifice to the earth goddess or to natural causes, is more than I can say. The double event settled any doubts the old woman had. She was not ready to face a long term of imprisonment, but was quite ready to do three months to get a baby. A few days after the arrival of the second baby, the old woman went out about sunset ; and seeing a little boy playing close to her house, she tempted him with sweetmeats, just as the two young women had tempted the little girl, to go with her to a little wood about a mile from the village. There she strangled the poor little chap and to make assurance doubly sure, she cut a slice off his thigh and ate it. Then she strewed marigold flowers over his body, buried it and burnt sticks of incense to the earth goddess.

The little boy was the son of the village blacksmith and he was missed at supper time. The blacksmith went to the police, who at once started enquiries. The old woman had been more wary than the two young ones; she had avoided the main paths and thought she had met no one on the way to the wood. But in a village everything is known. A cultivator's wife, going with her husband's dinner to the field, where he was watching his crops had seen the old woman and the boy together. The police crossquestioned the old woman. She made a stout defence, but at last she broke down and confessed. Once she made a confession she stuck to it, both before the committing magistrate and the trying judge; and in both cases she added that she was readyto do the three months which the Government would give her. The judge sentenced her to death, as he had sentenced the young women. But he also had felt nettled at the action of the Government in reducing his previous sentences. In his judgment he drew the attention of the High Court to the deplorable effect of the leniency shewn in the previous case. But for it, the old woman would never have committed the crime, and the blacksmith's little boy would still be alive. Their Lordships did not fail to follow so excellent a lead. They confirmed the poor old woman's death sentence and sent up the papers to Government, demanding in a haughty letter the reason of their action in the previous case and drawing their attention to its consequences. My poor friend and superior, the judical member, lost his head completely on getting the papers. I urged him strongly to change the old woman's death sentence to transportation for life, and to reply politely to the High Court that the Government, while regretting what had happened, must reserve to themselves the right of deciding when to exercise the Crown's prerogative of mercy. But the judicial member would not listen to my advice. He made me write a humble apology to their Lordships, and confirmed the death sentence.

"Well, did the old lady have a baby?" asked one of the diners.

"She never had a chance, poor soul. Executions follow quickly on the confirmation of death sentences. And long before she could have had a baby, the poor old thing was hanged in the Euroda jail."

At this point Smith stopped and began to relight his cigar, which had gone out as he told his story. The others watched him in a silence broken only by the gentle snores of "Alligator Joe." The representative of the Danish firm had collapsed in his chair and "fessus vino atque labore" was slowly, very slowly, slipping under the table.

it is a
amusement [illegible]
Story. [illegible] Reading, if you
Read nothing you will get
nothing. [illegible] other things
Now there is [illegible]
interested by a [illegible] that
you [illegible]
the [illegible]
reading

THE POLICEMAN'S STORY

It was a November morning and, as is often the case in the Deccan, heavy masses of mist lay upon the Sahyadri mountains. The Indrayani river sparkled below my feet, as I stood upon its bank. Great sacred fish moved silently in the clear water or every now and then came to the surface in the hope of a handful of monkey nuts. On the opposite bank a six foot crocodile sunned itself, indifferent to the villagers, who passed along the path not more than fifty yards away. Behind me lay the little village of Dehu through which I had just passed. There I had seen the grocer's shop, where Tukaram* had worked and failed. A Brahman beside me was now courteously explaining that the pool in front of me was the spot, where certain evil minded Brahmans had vainly thrown

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* Tukaram was a famous Marathi poet of the 17th century.

Tukaram's poems into the water. After immersion for thirteen days, they had come again to the surface, kept dry by the divine power of Shri Krishna of Pandharpur. Just then a man came up dressed in a pilgrim's saffron robe and carrying in his hand a pilgrim's saffron banner. He listened to our talk for sometime, as the Brahman related one after the other Tukaram's many miracles. Then he said most courteously and respectfully : " If the Sahib would care to hear me, I can tell him of a still greater miracle which Tukaram worked for me only recently." The Brahman's lip curled scornfully. " Is it likely that Tukaram would work a miracle for a Sudra like you ? " "And why not ? " retorted the pilgrim, " was Tukaram not a Sudra himself ? Is he not more likely to help one of his own caste than one of the caste that persecuted him ? " The Brahman was silenced for the moment; and I encouraged the Maratha to tell the story that was trembling on his lips.

" Sahib, I am a Maratha by caste and my

name is Ganpat; I come from the R[illegible]giri district. My father and mother drifted off first to Bombay in search of work and then, I know not why, drifted to Karachi in Sind. I was a little boy at the time and my parents did not think fit to tell me why they went. They settled down in Karachi and there they married my elder brother Shripati to a Maratha woman of that town. Shripati joined the police; and two or three years later when I had grown up, I also joined the police force. Owing no doubt to some sins we had committed in a former life, the Deputy Inspecting Sahib (the Deputy Inspector General), transferred my brother and myself to the police force at Jacobabad. Of all countries that country is the worst. In the [illegible]mmer the sun's heat is something that we Marathas never even dream of; and in the winter the cold is terrible. The winds from the mountains cut one in half and the icy rain chills one to the bone. Nevertheless, Sahib, we Marathas are a hardy people and Shripati and I stood the climate well and in the end gre[illegible]ed to it. Food, moreover, was cheap and the water was good and plentiful. Then suddenly black trouble came upon us. I have said, Sahib, that Shripati had married a Maratha woman of Karachi. That was the cause of all our misfortunes. Had my parents sent for a Maratha woman from the Konkan or the Deccan, she would have been a faithful wife. In no case would she have betrayed her husband with a Musulman, since from childhood all Marathas learn to hate Musulmans, because of the way they oppressed us in the time of Shivaji Maharaj. But my sister-in-law's family had been for two generations in Karachi and had come to be quite friendly with the Musulmans there. So Tarab[illegible]that was my sister-in-law's name—had no dislike for Mlencchas.* Thus it happened when one Shamsher Khan, a small zamindar of Jacobabad, thought Tarabai fair and made advances to her, she was flattered by his attentions and in no long time became his mistress. Shamsher Khan would come to the lines in my brother's absence or Tarabai would go to Shamsher Khan's house on a pretence of buying flour in the bazaar. Of course, people began to talk and I came to hear of the scandal. I told Shripati what I had heard and that evening he scolded Tarabai sharply. He told her that for any Maratha woman even to talk to a Mlenccha was a defilement. He reminded her how the god Shiva had taken human form and become incarnate as Shivaji Maharaj, in order to free Maharashtra and quoted to her verse after verse from the Dasbodh, the book of the holy Ramdas.* But she merely laughed and said with shameless impudence, that she was sick to death of hearing about Shivaji Maharaj and Ramdas and Mlencchas. For her part she wished she was a Musulman, so that she might have married some big strong rich man like Shamsher Khan and not a beggarly Maratha sepoy on ten rupees a month. Shripati was deeply shocked at such blasphemy and thought that he would be committing a sin, if he did not punish Tarabai for her wicked words. He took her by the hair and gave her several smart cuts across the back and shoulders with the cane he carried when off duty. She fought like a tigress and scratched him all over his face and hands with her nails. That evening after Shripati had gone to sleep, she took her jewelry and fled to the house of Shamsher Khan. When Shripati woke up he missed her, but he thought she had gone to fetch water and without looking for her, went about his work. At 11 a.m. he came home ; she was still absent and he noticed that her clothes and jewelry were missing also. He at once went to Shamsher Khan's house, but it was shut up. On enquiry from the neighbours he learnt that Shamsher Khan and a Hindu woman had gone off early that morning on camels to Baluchistan. He came back very sorrowfully to my hut and told me what had happened. I told him to let his wife be. She had become a Musulman and " Batila to mela " (He who is converted to Islam is dead). But unhappily for Shripati he was of a kindly nature and he could not bear to think that his wife should become a common harlot. That he knew was the fate in store for her. He went to a petition writer and he had his story written out and sent it by way of petition to the Political Agent Sahib at Quetta. The Political Agent made enquiries and finding Shripati's story true, he got the chief of the country, to which Shamsher Khan and Tarabai had fled, to send her back under police escort. Some days later she came back to us. The moment I saw her, I knew that Shripati had done a foolish thing to get her back, for her face wore a deep scowl and there was murder in her eyes. She was like this for a week. Then she suddenly changed and one night she threw herself at Shripati's feet and begged his forgiveness. All night she wept and whined for mercy, until at last his heart melted towards her and he forgave her. Next morning he told me and said how true had been Tarabai's repentance, how clearly she saw her wickedness and how deep was her hatred for that rakhshas (demon) Shamsher Khan, who had led her astray. He brought her to me and to me also she abased herself a hundred times. At first, I too thought her repentance true. But then as I watched her closely, I began to have doubts. Although her body was shaken with sobs, there never were any tears on her cheeks ; and although when either of us talked to her, her mouth curved in humble smiles, her eyes remained hard and cold. That evening as I went for a walk, I saw Shamsher Khan about half a mile from the police lines; and then I felt sure that Tarabai was fooling my brother and only waiting a chance again to join her lover. I told Shripati next day, but by that time Tarabai had completely won him back and he would not listen to me. I went back to my hut with a foreboding of deadly evil hanging over us. I did not see my brother again that day, but at midnight another sepoy called me, saying my brother was very ill. I got up and went to his hut. About 10 p.m., so his wife said, he had been taken ill and after vomiting and purging for over two hours, he was now on the point of death. Her face showed the deepest woe in every line, but again I saw that her eyes were hard and dry. I noticed too, that she would not let me go near enough to Shripati to have speech of him. Yet he wanted badly to say something. At last I lost all patience with her and pushed past her to get my ear to my brother's mouth. She turned on me like a wounded panther and fought and scratched and tore me, trying to keep me from Shripati until life had left him. Then I knew that she had murdered him. I caught her by the hair and the sari and drove her out of the hut, slamming the door in her face. I rushed back to my brother's bed only just in time. With his last breath he whispered to me that his wife had cooked a meal for him, that he had eaten it and had at once become ill. She had certainly poisoned him. All next day I was overcome with grief and had not the heart to complain to the Superintendent Sahib. I should not have been so sluggish and I suffered grievously for my fault. In the interval Tarabai got leave to bury my brother. As a Hindu his body should have been burnt. But I should have had to carry the pot or fire and set alight the wooden pyre in the burning ground. So Tarabai had Shripati buried just as if he had been a Musulman. With the help of Shamsher Khan and a friend of his Sikandar Khan, a rich zamindar, to whom for a hundred rupees, it would seem, he had sold a half share of Tarabai's favours, she had Shripati's name entered in the register of births and deaths, as having died of a sudden stroke of paralysis. The next day I had sufficiently recovered from my grief to enquire what had happened to Shripati's body. I wanted to have it examined by a doctor, so that Tarabai's guilt might be made manifest. But I was told that it had been buried and could not be taken out of the ground without the order of a magistrate. In a great rage I went to the Superintendent Sahib and told him all the truth. But he shewed me the entry in the death register that Shripati had died of a paralytic stroke. When I said that the entry was false, he got angry and drove me away. He was very quick tempered; but it was partly my fault too. I could not speak Sindhi; my Hindustani was the jargon we learn down here; and the Sahib never having served in the Deccan, knew no Marathi. I did not lose heart, for I was resolved to bring that she devil of a Tarabai to justice. I wrote several petitions one after the other to the district magistrate. I said in them over and over again that Shripati had been poisoned and that if the Government would only dig up his body, they would find his stomach full of poison. The first petition the District Magistrate merely sent to the Superintendent for disposal and the Superintendent sent for me and warned me not to send any more petitions. But I would not heed him, Sahib, because I knew that the entry in the register was utterly false. I sent three other petitions. At last the District Magistrate thought that perhaps there might be something in what I said. He sent for me and told me that he would order the body to be disinterred, if I still wished it. If it contained no poison, he would send me to prison. I joyfully agreed, for I knew that poison would be found in my brother's stomach. So the District Magistrate had poor Shripati's body dug out of the ground and his stomach sent to Bombay for the chemical analyser to examine. In a month's time the chemical analyser's report came. He had found a quantity of arsenic in Shripati's stomach. But in the meantime the District Magistrate to whom I had made my report had gone on leave and a new District Magistrate had come in his place. Still the facts were so clear that I had little or no doubts. I did not know what fiends I had to deal with.

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* infidels.

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*A famous Deccan saint and poet.

Shamsher Khan and Sikandar Khan by bribing the District Magistrate's clerks learnt that the chemical analyser had reported the presence of arsenic in the dead man's stomach. So they invented a new tale altogether ; and with the help of Sikandar Khan's money hired a number of seemingly respectable men to support it. I knew nothing of this at the time and when the District Magistrate sent for me, I went gladly enough to his camp. But the moment I saw him, I knew that things would not go well with me. The Superintendent Sahib was angry with me, because I had gone on making petitions and he had prejudiced the District Magistrate against me. I said to him that my brother had told me that he had been poisoned and that if poison had been found inside him, the facts were clear; because it was Tarabai who had given him his last meal. She, therefore, must have murdered him. The false entry which she had made was a further proof of her guilt. But the district magistrate said angrily that nothing was proved at all. The entry was a mere mistake of the registering clerk and as for the poison Tarabai was ready to explain everything. I was so amazed that I could only reply that I did not know what Tarabai had to say. The District Magistrate sent for Tarabai. The shameless woman entered the office with the most perfect look of innocence. She spoke in Sindi which of course she knew well, having been born in Sind. The Sahib knew that language also, but it had to be translated to me, so I was at a disadvantage. Her tale was this. Her husband was ill of leprosy. He had for many years tried vainly various cures and treatments. At last the day before his death he had been on a market day to a village 2 or 3 miles away. There he had met a Panjabi fakir, who professed to cure leprosy. Shripati ready to try any treatment in the hope of getting rid of his terrible sickness, had consulted him. The fakir had given him four arsenic powders, one to be taken every day for four days. The first day Shripati had taken one powder. The next day he had felt so much better, that in his anxiety to be cured, he had swallowed the three remaining powders at one time and had thus died of an overdose of arsenic. The tale, no doubt, seems too strange, Sahib, for any one to believe. But if you had heard Tarabai give her evidence, you would have thought differently. Her acting was such as I had never imagined possible. Her look of innocence, her tears of grief at her husband's death, her resentment at my unbrotherly conduct were so wonderful that I cannot describe them. When she had done, all the witnesses suborned by Sikandar Khan came and corroborated her. The registering clerk swore that Tarabai had told him the very tale which she had sworn in court, but that he had by mistake entered the cause of Shripati's death in the wrong line. Sure enough in the line below were the words "Accidental death from overdose of arsenic." It was a simple forgery, for the said line had remained blank for several weeks and when the chemical analyser's report came, the registering clerk made his false entry. But the magistrate believed him and after him came other witnesses, who had seen Shripati go to the Panjabi fakir and get his powders; others had seen him take the three powders all together ; others had heard from his own lips the cause of his illness. I was dumbfounded. I asked a few questions but the witnesses answered them with perfect calmness. At last the District Magistrate drove me out of his office. A few days later I was suspended from the service of the Sarkar; and I was prosecuted for making a false charge against the innocent Tarabai. Before the magistrate I had no chance. He was a Sindi and a friend of Sikandar Khan. But I had great hopes that before the judge my innocence would be established. I was wrong. My ignorance of the Sindi language was my ruin. I had no pleader and I could not follow what the witnesses said. There was an interpreter, but he only translated half of what Tarabai and the others said ; and by this time they knew their parts so well that they acted better even than before the District Magistrate. Before the case was half way through, I knew I was lost and I only wondered what punishment I should receive. In due time I learnt I had been found guilty and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. I was sent to jail at Haidarabad and there I think I should have died of sorrow and impotent anger at Tarabai's triumph. But by the grace of God the under-jailor there was a Deshasth Brahman from Poona. He was interested in me, because I came from the south and spoke Marathi. One day I told him my story. He believed it and was horrified. He pressed me to appeal. But I had had enough of the Sarkar's courts. I feared that the appellate court would increase my sentence from two years to five years. But the Brahman jailor assured me that this could not happen. At last a day or so before my time for appealing was over, he got me to dictate my appeal. He saw to it also that the clerk wrote out my case properly; and for this I can never thank him enough. As a rule the clerk writes anything that comes into his head, being too lazy to get to the bottom of the prisoners' stories. I had but little hope of getting out of jail, but that good Brahman daily comforted me and read me out passages from Tukaram and told me how the saint had been persecuted and how in the end God had saved him and made his name famous for ever. There was one hymn of his which begins "Aga Karunakar" (Come Lord of Pity) that I liked best and I used to make him say it over and over again. One day the Brahman came to me with a serious face, as if he had grave news to tell. I feared that he would say that my appeal had been rejected. But instead of answering my timid question, he said "What will you do Ganpat, if Tukaram were to hear your prayers?" "O, Jailor Sahib, anything you tell me." "Will you go as a pilgrim to Pandharpur?" "Yes indeed, I will." Then his kindly face broke into smiles and he showed me a paper which, he said, was an order of release. I was not yet acquitted, but the judges of the appeal court had ordered my release on bail, pending the hearing of my appeal. Still I knew they would not have passed such an order, had they not intended to acquit me. I passed a bond to appear in court on the day fixed for my appeal. When the day came, I appeared in the appeal court at Karachi. I did not follow what was said, as the judges and the pleaders spoke in English. But I was told by the interpreter that I had been acquitted. I rose and salaaming respectfully left the court a free man.

"But what happened to Tarabai ? " I asked, for I hoped that her sin had found her out. "Nothing that I know of, Sahib; I had had enough of trying to have her punished. Besides I thought that if God had power to set me free, he had power to punish her in his own good time. My task was clear. I went to Haidarabad and throwing myself at the feet of that wise old Brahman sub-jailor, thanked him from the bottom of my heart for all his kindness. But he would hardly accept my thanks ; for he said they were due to Tukaram and Krishna of Pandharpur. He reminded me also of my promise to go on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur and he lent me money to take me to the Deccan. Surely, Sahib, he must himself be a reincarnation of one of our Deccan saints. After bidding him goodbye, I went back to Karachi and thence by steamer to Bombay and a day or two ago I reached Poona by rail. There I donned a pilgrim's robe, that I might walk begging my way to Pandharpur. But before I went there I came here to offer my thanks to the saint Tukaram."

"But who do you suppose helped you, Tukaram or Krishna?"

"How can I say, Sahib, for certain? But I think this is what happened. The old Brahman loved and worshipped Tukaram and Tukaram loved him in turn. And for love of the old Brahman, Tukaram interceded with Shri Krishna, so that he helped me."

"Then you think that Shri Krishna guided the judges of the Appeal Court to a right decision?" "Well partly that, Sahib, and partly this. All the other officers had Tarabai in front of them and were deceived by her amazing skill and wickedness; for indeed it needed more than a human mind not to be so deceived. Whereas the judges of the Appeal

Court had only the papers before them and without Tarabai's diabolical influence they were as clear as daylight. Who unless bewitched by a pisach (She devil) would have credited such a tale ? Did man ever hear of arsenic given as a cure for leprosy ? Why was no doctor summoned to show that my brother had leprosy ? Why was the Panjabi fakir not produced ? Was any one likely to have swallowed three doses of arsenic at a mouthful, when the doctor had prescribed only one daily ? The story was absurd. But behind it was the Satanic influence of Tarabai and it overpowered the wits of the District Magistrate and the judge. Whereas when the matter came before the judges of the appeal court, the divine power of Shri Krishna only was present and the baleful magic of Tarabai was not. In this way the judges saw the truth, as they read the papers."

"And after your pilgrimage what will you do, Ganpat?"

"I shall once more take service in the police, Sahib."

"In Sind, Ganpat?" I asked with a smile.

"Tche!" he said with a gesture of disgust. "Here, here in the Deccan."

His eyes wandered along the winding reaches of the Indrayani to the wide, rolling uplands of the east, then turned back to the Bambhunath Hills where Tukaram had hidden and worked and then beyond to the endless folds of the Sahyadri mountains. To him at any rate this was God's own country.

There the very
strange [illegible] in
This [illegible].
[illegible]

THE GUJARATI WOMAN'S STORY.

Alandi lies some ten or twelve miles to the north of Poona. It was here that the saint Dnyandev at the bidding of the god Shri Krishna of Pandharpur buried himself alive. It was here, too, that Dnyandev had his famous contest with the rival saint Changdev. The latter rode to meet Dnyandev mounted on a tiger with a snake in his hand instead of a whip. Dnyandev countered by mounting a wall and making it run forward to meet the tiger. Changdev owned himself beaten and obtained leave to become the pupil of Dnyandev. The tiger and the snake have gone the way of all flesh; but the wall still survives and a rich Guzarati merchant encased it some years ago in a covering of concrete. I had gone to Alandi, sightseeing and was returning from an inspection of the wall, when I ran into a band of pilgrims, who carried flags and shouted "Dnyanoba!

Tukaram ! Dnyanoba ! Tukaram ! " and marched in step to their shouts. Following them was a middle-aged woman, whose dress was a mixture of the Gujarati and Marathi costume. Her bodice was open at the back after the fashion of Gujarat. But she did not wear the short Gujarati sari (mantle) and petticoat. She wore the endless Marathi sari which does the duty both of skirt and sari and keeps its place by a miracle of deft folding, beyond the power of man and especially of foreign man to describe or indeed understand.

"Who are you ? where have you come from ? " I asked her courteously.

" Mi Bombayse alon " (I have come from Bombay) she answered in a deplorable jargon half Hindustani, half bad Marathi, pronounced with the unmistakable twang of Gujarat. Then she added doubtfully " Sahibne Gujarati avadatun nathi ? " (Does the Sahib not know Gujarati ?) " Avade Che " (I know it) and at once the flood gates of her eloquence were opened on me. I had boldly said that I knew

Gujarati and I had known it ten years before. But at the time I was uncommonly rusty and her Gujarati was mixed up with half a dozen other languages. Still out of the torrent I managed to rescue the following story.

" As the Sahib has asked me whence I come, I shall begin at the beginning and tell him the tale of my life. The first thing I remember, Sahib, was that I was in Bombay. I was a little girl of five, I suppose, or thereabouts and I used to beg from passers by. What I begged I gave to my mother, who was lying ill in a room in a " chawl."* She had come with my father to get work in Bombay and so long as he lived, my mother was happy enough. He always found work and earned good wages. One day, however, he was killed by a fall from a building and my mother had to earn her own living. This she did for a year or two and then fell ill of I know not what disease. This is how I came to beg. Then she too died ;

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* Block of buildings.

and I was driven out of the ‘ chawl ’ into the streets. I used to live on what I begged and at night I slept under a doorway or under a tree. One day a Gujarati boy of eighteen or so came up to me and gave me food and talked to me in my own language. He did this for two or three days and so I came to like him. One morning he asked me if I would go with him to Poona. I agreed. He ook me there by train that night and next morning he sold me to a Gujarati courtesan, who plied her trade in Budhwar Peth (a street in Poona). The courtesan married me to a dagger, gave me the name of Chandbai and enrolled me in her trade. For some years I was too young, but when I grew old enough I began to earn money and bring my mistress profit. One day when I was about twenty, a Gujarati bania called Gopaldas offered to take me as his kept mistress, if I would go with him. I readily agreed ; for although I was a very gold mine to the courtesan, who had bought me, I made nothing myself. She took everything I earned, giving me only food, clothes and lodging. I told her I was leaving her and she got very angry. She tried to stop me by main force. But she had grown old and I was in my full youth. I seized her by the hair and tore her sari off her and threatened to drag her naked into the street, unless she let go of me. Shameless though she was, she would not face the bazaar naked ; so she let me go and followed me to the door, pouring abuse on my head. But I was now free and I cared little for her abuse.

" The Gujarati bania Gopaldas took me to Satara, where his father had a big grocery business. The father was wealthy, but the son was a spendthrift and a vagabond and a drunkard and he spent his father's money as soon as it was made. At last his father turned him out of the house, giving him ten thousand rupees as his share of the ancestral property. With this money he built me a house and there we lived together. We were quite happy as long as his ten thousand rupees lasted. But he soon drank what remained after building the house. Then he begged sums of money from his father. But because of his idleness, his father grew more and more unwilling to help him. Gopaldas tried to make out that I was to blame for his idleness, as if he had not been just as idle before he ever saw me. Whenever he got drunk, he used to beat and abuse me, until I grew to hate him. Then his father died and being at his wit's end he sued his step-brothers—his father's sons by his second wife for his share of the property, falsely alleging that he and his father had never separated. To get funds for his suit, he tried to get me to mortgage my house. But I refused, for I knew he could never win ; so he went and mortgaged my house, alleging it was his own. In this way he raised enough money to launch his suit. He went to the sub-court, the district judge's court and the High court, but he lost in all three. He lied amazingly well, but he had no case; for his old father knowing what a rascal the son was, had taken a partition deed from him. When his appeal was dismissed by the High Court, the money-lender sued on his mortgage, making me a party. But I was able to show that the house was mine. The money-lender then prosecuted Gopaldas for cheating and the magistrate gave him six months. All the time that he was in prison, Gopaldas was brooding over his losses and his ill-fortune, attributing them all to me. He came out of jail with a burning desire for vengeance.

" In his absence I had put him altogether out of my life and had begun to receive into my house better class Brahmans and Prabhus. I had also bought a little girl whom I called my niece. She was a charming little Gujarati girl from Bombay. We were devoted to each other and I hoped that when I grew old, she would repay my care and provide for my old age out of her earnings. One day Gopaldas met this little girl and the fiend saw how he might strike at me through her. She used to go to school every day, for the more women are taught nowadays the more men admire them. She was already in the fourth Marathi and the first English standard. Gopaldas would give her sweetmeats daily and she, not thinking any harm, took them, and used to walk with him part of the way home. One day taking advantage of her childlike trust in him, he led her down a sidestreet to a big well and as she leant over the side to see the water, he pushed her so that she lost her balance and fell in. Then he went away to the Kanara country, as quickly as he could. That evening I missed my niece and searched high and low for her but in vain. I told the police and they, too, enquired but without result. On the third day after the murder, my poor little niece's body rose to the surface; and a man going to the well to draw water, saw it and told the police. The body was taken out. I identified it and the police learnt from the neighbours that a day or two before, a Gujarati had passed that way with a little girl. I at once knew the Gujarati must be Gopaldas and in my complaint to the police I charged him with the murder. Here the woman's eyes lit up with such a fire of insane hatred, that I had to beg her to calm herself.

"Nay, Sahib" she answered "it is nothing, for it is all an old story now; but when I talk of that villain, I do sometimes lose control of myself. Now I am once more calm and I shall go on with my story. Well the police searched for Gopaldas, but they could not find him. They published pictures of him and circulated copies of them in different villages. One day, however, they caught him by a pretty trick." Here she stopped to give a chuckle of satisfaction "Two policemen, a Brahman sub-inspector and a Maratha sepoy, were travelling some weeks later through the Kanara district. At one station the Brahman sub-inspector saw Gopaldas at the railway tea-shop. Having seen his picture in some police gazette, the Brahman sub-inspector thought that he recognised him. He pointed him out to the Maratha sepoy and they set a snare to take him. They got down from the train and going close to Gopaldas they, too, ordered tea at the tea shop. While they were drinking it, they began to talk according to their prepared plan.

"The Brahman said to the Maratha 'The plague is very bad in Satara now. I hear that Chandbai is among the last lot of victims.' The Maratha answered 'what, that Chandbai whose niece was drowned in the well?' 'Yes' replied the Brahman 'that very Chandbai.' Gopaldas was listening to this talk and when he heard that I was dead, he was so pleased that he fell into the snare. He lifted up his hands to heaven, like the fool that he was, and said at the top of his voice. 'See! Chandbai you wicked woman! You were too clever for man to punish, so God has punished you himself.'

The words had no sooner left his lips, than the two policemen sprang upon him and handcuffed him. They took him to Satara where many people identified him as Gopaldas. Indeed he did not deny his identity. He only tried to make out that the little girl had fallen into the well by accident. But when the judge asked him why he had not tried to save her and above all why he had run away, he had no answer. So the judge convicted him and ordered him to be hanged; and hanged he was, Sahib, and I rejoiced greatly both when I gave evidence against him and when I heard of his execution. For he was a bad, wicked, abominable.........."

As Chandbai was again working herself up to a dangerous state, I thought I should intervene.

"What have you been doing since?" I asked.

"Nothing, Sahib. I would not receive any more men after my niece's death. My hatred for Gopaldas made me hate the whole race of men. Moreover, I had put by some money and I sold my house for more than it had cost to build. Now I am going to lead a good life and sin no more. I am going to build a temple to Krishna and like Mirabai I shall spend the rest of my life worshipping Him."

"But why will you build it here and not at Pandharpur?" I asked.

" For the same reason that Dnyandev, so I am told, buried himself here and not at Pandharpur. There his fame would have been swallowed up in Shri Krishna's. Here he is the guardian godhead of the place. At Pandharpur such a temple, as I could build, would be lost beside the great temple to Shri Krishna. Here it may win me some little fame."

I could take no exception to such excellent intentions. I wished her all success and bade her goodbye. Some years later I happened when passing Alandi to visit the same spot, and I saw a charming little shrine to Krishna. One of its stones had a marble face on which a Gujarati inscription told the public that the shrine had been erected by the virtuous Chandbai. I asked a Brahman about it and was told a story of a wonderful and saintly widow, who after a life of good deeds had come to end her days at Alandi and had built the shrine. The wanton life of the Gujarati woman had been completely overlaid by another and virtuous one. I had been fortunate enough to meet her at the transition stage, just when Magdalen was passing from sin to saintship.

The [illegible] of Wonderful [illegible]

My dear
[illegible],
Read [illegible] with these
[illegible] you will find
[illegible]

Anuk

A MARATHA WOMAN'S ROMANCE.

Say what one may about the wrongs of India, the sight of a woman weeping in the streets is a very rare one. It was, therefore, with genuine surprise that Charles Rawlings Assistant Superintendent of Police in Karachi saw, as he rode past the Merewether memorial, a woman standing close to it and crying. Karachi is the capital of Sind but there is little or nothing of Sind about it. It is a cosmopolitan town full of Gujaratis, Marwadis, Panjabis, Marathas and men from Lucknow and Allahabad. Hindustani is thus the *lingua franca* of the place; and in that tongue Rawlings, riding up, asked the woman what ailed her. She evidently did not catch what the young policeman said, for she drew her sari across her face and muttered in Marathi, that she did not know English. Rawlings looked at her dress and saw that she wore the long blue sari, that does duty both for a mantilla and a skirt with the Deccan woman. He repeated his question in such Marathi as he could muster. She understood, but only answered "I cannot say; I lost my way." As she spoke, she reeled slightly and to steady herself caught with one hand at an iron post in the railing round the memorial. The woman was quite young, but she was clearly either very ill or very hungry. At first Rawlings could not think what to do. He had never had to deal with a case quite like this before. Then he remembered a stout old Maratha Jamadar with a kindly and still stouter wife. They lived close by; so after the young woman had recovered herself, he took her to their house and asked them to give her food. They did and she ate and drank greedily. There was nothing the matter with her except starvation. The young policeman was greatly puzzled. The woman wore no ornaments, but she looked well cared for and her sari was of good material and neither torn nor shabby. He tried hard to learn her story, but all that she would say was "I lost my way." At last the old jamadar whispered to him "Let her be, Sahib; my wife will talk to her and she will tell my wife what she will not tell you or me."

Rawlings took the jamadar's advice and rode off to his work. Next morning he had forgotten all about the incident. "But when he again rode past the Merewether memorial he saw the jamadar evidently looking out for him "Hallo! Jamadar Sahib" he cried cheerily, as the matter came back with a rush to his memory "Did the Bai Sahib get anything out of that Maratha girl?" "Yes indeed, Sahib" said the fat jamadar with a broad grin on his kindly face "My wife has got it all. If the Sahib will come to our house he will hear it and the tale is really quite interesting." "Very well" said the young Englishman and rode alongside the jamadar to his house. There Rawlings found the fat jamadar's still fatter wife and the Maratha woman. She looked much happier and quite pretty after her food, and night's rest.

She veiled her face with her sari and at first, pretended to be shy. But this was a mere matter of form and she soon yielded to the importunities of the jamadar's wife, who was delighted with her success. At last she began, gaining confidence as she proceeded. "Sahib" she said, my name is Tapibai and I am the wife of Arjun, a mechanic on the railway. My husband has been here two generations, but I come from the Deccan. My husband went three years ago to his native village of Aundh in the Aundh state and there he married me and took me back to Karachi. We have two rooms in a big chawl near the Karachi railway station; for my husband earns forty rupees a month in the railway workshop. Not far from us live a Musulman and his wife, and the wife has been very kind to me, since I came to stay in this town. Two evenings ago the Musulman woman came to me, as I was fetching water at the well against my husband's return from the railway workshop, where he was working overtime. She said she had something to say to me. Would I go with her to a big tree about thirty yards away. I took the water into the house and returned to the Musulman woman and walked with her to the tree. This was a great fault on my part, for it was getting late and she could have told me anything proper for me to hear, where we stood by the well. But without thinking and curious to hear what the Musulman woman had to say to me, I went with her to the tree. Directly we were in the shadow of the tree, out jumped the woman's husband. They both pulled my sari over my head and the man pricking me in the back with the point of a knife, that he had in his hand, said in a terrible voice 'Get into the carriage; if you say a word we shall kill you.' I was frozen with fear. My husband would be returning soon and would miss me. At the same time a prick of the knife point in the side, a good deal deeper than the first one showed me that the man was in earnest. My knees gave way under me and I fainted. The pair then lifted me up and carried me to a carriage close by; the coachman whipped his horse and we started off. I could not see well how we went because my face was covered with my sari; but once looking up I saw through a fold Druv* and the seven rishis in the sky right ahead of us, so I knew we were going north.

"We must have driven for three quarters of an hour when we came to a square. It had one solitary oil lamp at one corner. If there were other lamps, they were not lit and except for one flickering light the square was quite dark. Here the coachman stopped and came to the side of the carriage. All three dragged me out and under the street lamp they took off my necklace, nose ring, finger rings, anklets, bangles, armlets and toe rings. They were worth about three hundred rupees. I had put them on that night to welcome my husband. I cried at their loss, but it was of no use to scream, as the square was quite deserted and the houses all round unlit.

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* Druv is the North Star. The seven rishis are the Great Bear.

When the robbers had taken my jewelry, they dragged me back to the carriage and again drove on northwards. At last we came to a house on the very outskirts of the town. It was a two storied house with a high wall round it ; at a door in the wall the carriage stopped. The coachman got off his seat and going to the door knocked 3 or 4 times before any one came. At last the door opened very slightly and some talk went on between the coachman and someone inside. Then the door opened and a man said something in Sindi. I was made to get out and was taken inside. The door opened on a large enclosed space, round which were built rooms. In the centre were two or three kneeling camels. In one corner were three young women, one a year or so younger than I and two about the same age. I was dragged near them and thrown down on the ground and left. I looked at the girls beside me and noticed that their hands and feet were tied. I whispered to the nearest one in Hindustani, asking what it all meant and why their hands and feet were tied. The girl whispered back in a voice broken with sobs, that we were to be taken to Las Bela and sold there to some Baluch barbarians. They were to have started that night on the camels in the open space, but because of me they had been delayed and the camel men had gone out to fetch another camel. 'Where is Las Bela?' I asked. The girl said 'It is four days journey away up north ! I believe. But I am from Gujarat and I know nothing of these parts.' My blood ran cold within me as I thought of the fate that awaited us. To be married to some disgusting barbarian, to have to give up Hinduism, my husband and my people and to be cut off from India for ever ! Just then the men who had flung me down came back with cords and wanted to tie my hands and feet. But I knew that if they tied me up, I was lost; so I said with a merry laugh in Hindustani "Nay, Sahibs why do you want to tie me up ; I am ready to go willingly. I am sick of my husband and the dull life of Karachi. I want to see the world and other men. You need not have carried me by force here. I should have come readily, had you told me you would take me away from this stupid hole." The men were fooled by my pretence and one of them patting me on the cheek said " You are a good little girl. I wish the others were as sensible. We shall not tie you up, but if you try to escape we shall certainly cut your throat " and he touched the knife-handle in his waistbelt meaningly. " You can keep your throat cutting for your own sheep, Mia,* I answered pertly "I am already won to your side, so why halal karo me?" The two men gave a coarse laugh and left me unbound. The other girls looked at me scornfully as if I had been a common town girl ; but the strain of my desperate jesting had left me no spirit to resent their scorn. I lay down on my side and must have almost at once fallen asleep. It was broad daylight when I awoke. Looking round I saw the

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* Mia is a respectful name for a Musulman. Halal Karo = to cut the throat of an animal to make it fit for human food.

Gujarati girl beside me, haggard and worn. She evidently had not slept all night "Why have they not taken us away?" I asked. 'You are doubtless in a great hurry to become a Mlenccha's mistress' said the Gujarati girl scornfully 'but you must restrain your longing, as best you can. They could not find another camel last night and they are going out again soon to have another search. Then, shameless one, your desires will be gratified!' I answered nothing, as I did not wish to betray my secret. Seeing an old woman sweeping the courtyard, I offered to help her. As I swept, I saw the men go out to search again for a camel to carry me. I gave them a merry nod as they passed, to reassure them. After they had gone half an hour, I began sweeping nearer and nearer the outer door. At last when I came to it, I swept the rubbish out of the door, turned the corner and dropping my broom ran for very life in the direction by which I thought I had come. But the road looked quite different by daylight and I lost my way. I wandered up and down gulleys and alleys, past butchers' houses and through outcastes' quarters. Once or twice men stopped me to see if I had any jewelry. But seeing I had none, they let me go; and in this way I strayed about Karachi city for hours. At last when I was nearly dead with hunger, I met the Sahib and he took me here where the jamadar's wife has fed me and cared for me. Now, Sahib, take me please to my husband Arjun, as he will be very anxious about me."

Rawlings had already sent a policeman to call Arjun and was expecting him at the police station. But aware of the leisurely ways of Maratha workmen, he knew it was useless to wait for him. He, therefore decided to test Tapibai's story by going to the places, where she had been robbed and confined. If her story were true, it was important to try and catch the robbers and also to release the captive girls. The Jamadar said he thought he knew the square of which she had spoken and sure enough after they had driven some way, Tapibai cried out "There it is !

There it is!" Another few seconds and the carriage had entered a dismal looking square, in one corner of which stood a toppling street lamp. Here Tapibai alighted and shewed her companions the spot where she had been forced to get down and whence she had been taken to the lamp and robbed. Thereafter she remembered how she had gone. It was by a straight road that ran due North to the bank of the Liari river, which marks the northern boundary of Karachi city. As they came near the river, she again gave an excited exclamation. "I've found it! I've found it!" and pointed to just such a two-storied house, as she had described. It had a high wall round it, enclosing an empty space. Rawlings knocked at the door but got no answer. He and the jamadar kicked in the planks of the door and forced their way in. Tapibai followed. She shewed them the place where the camels had knelt, where the girls had been tied up and where she had slept. In each spot there were marks on the ground that confirmed her story. Unhappily the place was deserted. The kidnappers had fled with their prey and must have been well on their way to the independent state of Las Bela. It was useless to stay longer. All the police could do was to try and catch the Musulman and his wife. Their house was close to Arjun's; so the party drove back across Karachi and by great good luck found them at home. They had made quite sure that Tapibai would never return and so had gone quietly back to their house to disarm suspicion. Their faces fell a long way when they saw Tapibai with Rawlings, the jamadar and several sepoys come to arrest them. The jamadar took Tapibai's statement and giving her back to Arjun, left them in order to work up the case against the two robbers. The jewelry was never found, but there was abundant evidence that the woman had called Tapibai and had taken her to the tree. The investigation finished, the case was sent to the committing magistrate, who in turn committed it to the session court.

As Rawlings had been concerned in the

investigation, he had to give evidence as a witness. After he had left the witness box, he stayed on in court, as the case interested him. Two witnesses gave their testimony and then Tapibai was called. She covered her face with her sari, but as her answers were unintelligible, the judge told her to put her sari back. As she did so, Rawlings noticed that she had on her forehead no "tila", the little round red mark that every Maratha woman wears so long as her husband is alive. Widowed, she rubs it off and does not renew it. When her examination in chief had ended, her cross examination began.

The line taken by the defence pleader was that Tapibai had gone out for some immoral purpose, had been robbed by some unknown persons on the way home and had tried to screen herself by telling this story against the two accused. Then Rawlings guessed why the unfortunate woman was wearing no "tila". Her husband had refused to take her back as his wife, until her character had been cleared. If the accused were convicted well and good; if not he would turn her into the streets to earn her living there. Rawlings ever afterwards thought that scene in court the most interesting, that he had ever witnessed. The defence pleader, anxious to do his duty by his clients and also to make a name for himself, pressed the unfortunate Tapibai with question after question; in fact he handled her so roughly that the presiding judge had to interfere once or twice to protect her. She, driven wild by the fear of losing her character and her home, fought with the courage of despair. Time after time Rawlings thought that the defence pleader had caught her in a trap; but each time she wriggled out of the snare with extraordinary skill. When her ordeal was over, the rest of the proceedings fell flat. Arjun told how on his return from work, he had missed his wife. Other witnesses deposed that they had seen her talking with the Musulman woman. The robbers examined by the judge pleaded absolute ignorance of everything. They had no doubt heard of Tapibai's disappearance; but they had attached no importance to it, as she was—so they insinuated—a well known bad character. Then the police came and arrested them for no reason whatever.

The judge summed up the evidence dispassionately. Neither he nor the jury guessed the tremendous importance to Tapibai of the court's decision. The jury returned after half an hour. Before they gave their verdict, Rawlings heard a whisper and looking round saw Tapibai squatting by his chair. She had managed to steal there unobserved and whispered to him in Marathi "For God's sake, Sahib, tell me what the jury say." The judge asked the jury in the usual solemn way "Gentlemen, are you agreed on your verdict ?" "Yes we are" was the reply. The young policeman could see Tapibai's breast so heave with excitement, that his own heart catching the contagion, began to thump like a sledge hammer. "What is your verdict?" asked the judge.

The foreman looked round in a pompous way and cleared his throat. "Will the man never get on?" muttered Rawlings to himself. "Our verdict is" here the wretched man began to cough and again to clear his throat. "Our verdict is guilty." Rawlings at once whispered to Tapibai "Aparadhi" (Guilty); and over her face there came such a smile as must come over the face of a sinner before the judgment seat, when he hears that he has been pardoned. The judge gave the accused five years each and the court rose.

Tapibai left the court her face beaming all over. Rawlings joined the jamadar and both followed her, until she went up to her husband. He looked at her for a full five minutes before he spoke the single word "Come." Then he walked homewards. She walked just behind him and said "Maharaj, what has happened, has happened. You will take me back, will you not ?" A minute or so passed before Rawlings heard the reply. " Shameless one, what has happened has happened, but if it happens again I shall cut your nose off." At this Tapibai gave a slight shiver and drawing her sari across her face, touched her nose as if to make sure that it was there.

Rawlings stood still until the couple had walked out of hearing, exchanging a few commonplaces with his subordinate. Then he suddenly said "Jamadar Sahib what do you make of it? Surely the accused robbed Tapibai as she described."

"Yes, Sahib" replied the jamadar "They robbed Tapibai exactly in the way she told us. But from gossip that my wife has heard, I do not think Tapibai told us the whole truth why she went with the Musulman woman. The latter is as bad a lot as one can find even in Karachi. She is a professional procuress and she led Tapibai into an intrigue with a Hindu clerk in her neighbourhood. That very night it had been settled that as her husband had been detained in the workshop, Tapibai should go to her lover's house. That was why she put on all her jewelry. She would not have done so merely for her husband.

The Musulman and his wife resolved to profit by Tapibai's frailty and to sell her to some professional Baluch kidnappers. No doubt the other girls whom Tapibai saw had been caught in much the same way."

"What do you suppose has happened to them?" asked Rawlings.

"They must have been taken to Las Bela by now, Sahib" said the jamadar; " and there they will remain always. It is three or four days by camel across a barren land between Karachi and Las Bela. Tapibai would be there, too, but for her courage and ready wit."

"Do you think she will keep straight now, Jamadar Sahib?" asked the Englishman.

The old jamadar replied carelessly. "How should I know, Sahib, what a woman will do, when God himself cannot even guess it. But that threat of nosecutting may perhaps keep her from further foolishness."

THE SEPOY'S STORY.

"Are there any Maratha soldiers here?" I asked a gaunt Eurasian nurse who met me at the door. She paused for a moment and then said in her curious country accent. "Yes, there is one at the far end of the room. But he is a grumpy creature. I should not talk to him. There are some very nice up-country men here, who would love to have a talk."

I was standing in the main room of the small hospital at B. not far from Poona. A double row of beds faced me; each contained a wounded Indian soldier. Overhead were large white punkas; but they were not in use, as it was the cold weather. From the beds looked out grave, whiskered faces of Sikhs, round, flat faces of Gurkhas, laughing, roguish faces of Deccan Musulmans. They all looked at me with welcome in their eyes. But my business was not with them. They spoke Hindustani and I spoke only Marathi.

Passing their beds with a courteous salaam, I passed on to the far end of the room where lay the "grumpy creature." He was a heavily built Maratha and he lay gloomy and disgruntled, almost hidden by the bed clothes. As I came near, his face grew more forbidding than ever. Still I walked on until I stood close to his head.

"Apan kase ahat?" (How are you?) I said to him in Marathi. The effect was magical. At once the scowl left his face and a broad grin took its place. "The Sahib speaks Marathi? Sit down, Sahib, and talk to me. All the English who come speak to me in broken Hindustani. And I hate the language. Is it not the language of the Mlenccha (the barbarian)?"

"Yes" I said with a laugh "I speak Marathi. Now tell me all about yourself; Who are you? and where do you live?"

"Yes, Sahib, without doubt I will. My name is Prataprao More. I come from the Krishna valley. Perhaps you know it? My village is Jor just below Mahableshwar."

"Yes," I said "I know it well. I have been there several times after panther."

With wider grin and readier speech, Prataprao went on "Then the Sahib will understand. I am one of the patilki* family and we trace back our descent to the Mores of Javli in King Shivaji's time. He paused looking to me to continue the conversation.

"But when did you join the army?" I asked. "Why did you leave Jor?"

"It was this way, Sahib. There was a feud in our village about June 1913. The son of the officiating patil was a great mischief-maker. He ate up our assessments and then complained to Government that we had not paid them. At last I could stand it no longer and one day when a murder occurred in our village, I denounced the patil's son. The police came and with my help they prosecuted him and the judge sentenced him to imprisonment for life. Thus we were rid of a rogue. But his father the patil hated me and he harassed me in every way he could.

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* The family of the patil or village headman.

Then the war broke out and I thought I should like to be a sepoy and leave the village. I spoke to my father. But he forbade me. He had heard dreadful stories of ships torpedoed in the black water. So he would not let me go with the recruiting havildar, when he came to Jor. Some weeks later an Englishman came to Jor. When the villagers heard of his coming, they all fled into the jungle. They said one to another " The Government are lost. They send round Englishmen to take the villagers by force to fight for them." But I stayed behind, resolved to speak to this Englishman, if I could. I went to his camp and salaamed to him and began to talk in such Hindustani as I knew, which was very little. What was my joy when the Sahib spoke to me in my own Deccan tongue. Then I told him with a frank mind all my trouble. I wanted to be a soldier. But was it true that all the sepoys who had left India had been drowned ? 'All lies' exclaimed the Englishman. 'Where is your father ? let me speak to him.' I led him to a fold in the hills, where my father and twenty other villagers were hiding. Then he spoke to them in their own tongue, so simply and truly that they all believed him. And my father said 'Go, boy, with the Sahib; he will be kind to you.' I went with him and twenty other youths in the village went with me. For indeed they could not help it. The Englishman stole our souls from out of our bodies."

"Who was the Englishman ?" I asked. "His name was Captain Burram Sahib" "Captain Burram Sahib" I repeated doubtfully. Then I remembered a tall keen soldier who loved his men and spent his leisure hours in learning their language, that he might talk to them in it. "Yes, Yes, I remember" I said "a fine soldier." "Well spoken, Sahib. He was the god Indra incarnate. Not a man in our company, but would have died for him ten times over, if it had been needed."

"You were in his double company?" I asked. "Yes Sahib. We, the youths from Jor, all asked that we might be placed in his double company. For we trusted him, as he knew our tongue. And he honoured us by consenting."

"Did you see any fighting? But you must have or otherwise you would not have been wounded."

"Yes indeed, we went with the Sahib to Poona. There they drilled us for some months and at last they sent us to Basra where the Poona brigade had landed and had beaten the Turks back up the Tigris. It was very hot in the city. The Konkan men did not mind it, but we men of the uplands felt it much, So the Colonel sent four companies of us Deccan men into camp on outpost duty. And Captain Burram Sahib was in command. We had great fun then, Sahib. The Arabs and Turks used to steal down to our camp and try to shoot us. And we would wait for them and try to shoot them as they stole up. But there was one Turk, whom we never could catch. He always knew where we were watching and came by some other path and every day he hit one of our sepoys. And daily Burram Sahib got more wrath with him. One day he posted double sentries round our camp, so that we might surely catch this rakshas (demon) of a Turk. And that same evening he himself crawled round so that he might see whether the sentries watched. In this way he came to where I and a comrade Ramrao Mane by name, lay hidden. He spoke to us and then raised himself on his hands to peer over a boulder at the moonlit landscape beyond. A second later there was a thud; a bullet from that accursed Turk had struck my beloved Sahib in the chest. He rose, whirled round and fell over." Here the sepoy paused for his throat choked his speech and two tears trickled down his dark cheek.

"I and Ramrao picked up Burram Sahib and carried him to the camp, weeping as we walked. Next day they put him on board a hospital steamer at Basra. Thence, so I heard, they took him to Bombay where they put him in a ship bound for Europe. But the hearts of all of us burnt with rage against that murderous Turk and Mane and I often talked how we should be avenged. But for many days it was idle talk. And daily the Turk killed or wounded one of our double company. At last I thought of a plan and I said to Mane 'I shall treat this Turk even as King [redacted] treated the [redacted] Afzal Khan.' Your Honour remembers the story ? "

"Yes" I answered "I know it well. King [redacted] fought Afzal Khan outside Pratapgad fort. He drove his steel claws which he carried in his hand into Afzal Khan's side and with his other hand he stabbed him".

"Hoy, Hoy" said the delighted sepoy. " Even so I vowed I would treat this Turk. That very evening I clad myself as a Musulman with a fez and white baggy trousers and I crawled out towards where Burram Sahib had been shot. I carried no rifle, but in my left hand I had tiger claws which the company armourer had made for me out of some nails, driven through a piece of a kerosine oil tin. And hidden in my clothes, was the short dagger which I had bought at the time the patil's son was troubling the villagers of Jor. For a time I saw nothing. Then I heard far away to the right a faint noise and guessed that it was the Turk crawling towards our lines. I stood upright and salaamed several times in the direction of the noise, so that he might think that I was a deserter. My trick succeeded, for not long afterwards I saw a dark body crawl noiselessly towards me. I lay flat on my face before him several times and said in Hindustani, "O Turk, I am a Musulman and can no longer fight on the side of these Kafirs (infidels). So I have come over to join those of the true faith in this jehad (crusade)" The Turk spoke not but came closer still. At last satisfied that I had no rifle, he rose too and came close to me. When he came near I saw that it was one Buland Khan, a havildar of the—th Punjabis whom I had seen at Basra and who, as I heard, had deserted. Then I knew how it was he had known our camp so well and how he had shot so many of our men. When the Turk came quite close, he said "Welcome as a true Ghazi." As he spoke he held out his arms to embrace me and I also clasped him with mine. And as I did so, I drove my claws with my left hand into his right side and my dagger into his back with my right hand. With a cry he fell to the ground and begged for mercy. But I heeded him not and with my dagger I quickly sawed off his head and carried it back with me to camp and showed it in triumph to Mane and the other sepoys."

" But Prataprao " I said " that was cruel of you. You should not have so dishonoured a fallen foe."

The sepoy's brow clouded slightly and he said in defiant tones " Does your Honour think that King Shivaji dishonoured Afzal Khan by cutting off his head ? "

" No, No " I said hastily for I knew how touchy the Maratha is on all matters concerning King Shivaji. " No, for he buried his head on the top of Pratapgad and built a fortress over it. I myself have often walked on Afzal Khan's tower and have looked from it into the Koyna valley below."

"Even so did I not dishonour the Turk. I took his head back to our lines and after the men had sufficiently feasted their eyes on it, we buried it just inside our trenches. And over it we placed upright a stone which bore a rude likeness to a human face and said "Let this stone be the likeness of our ancient king, the divine Shivaji." And me they made the guardian of our little temple, as it was I who had won the Turk's head. I painted the stone with red lead. For, as the Sahib knows, that is the way we honour our gods. And every morning I beat a drum in front of it, so that the god might wake. Then I bathed it and dried it and placed rice offerings in front of it. When the heat of the day came, I covered the image, so as to shade it from the heat of the sun. Then again in the evening I roused it and bathed it and offered more rice to it. Daily I beat the drum in front of it to scare away evil spirits and waved a lamp in front of it, so that its dazzled eyes might find sleep more easily. And always as I served the image, I kept King Shivaji in my mind and offered prayers to him. I did this for many days and at night I slept by my little temple. One day we had a long weary march along the banks of the Tigris to a spot where we hoped to surprise a band of Marsh Arabs. But they heard of our coming and escaped us. So we marched back, tired both with the heat and our failure. That same night as I slept, I dreamt that I saw King Shivaji standing before me. I had seen pictures of him and I knew at once his hooked nose and thin cheeks, his black, fearless eyes and resolute mouth. But he was clad in dazzling white raiment and instead of two arms he had four. The meaning of this I could not grasp, until the words of an old Brahman priest of Jor flashed across me. For often he used to tell us that Shivaji was not a man like the rest of us, but the incarnation of the great god Shiva. Then I looked again and saw that while in two of his hands he carried a dagger and tiger claws, in the other two he carried a trident and a conch.* I flung myself at full length on the ground and cried,

" God or King or whoever you are, I did indeed give false evidence against the patil's son. But he was a mischief-maker and the curse of all Jor."

Here I broke in and said " Do you mean, Prataprao, to say that you got the patil's son convicted on false evidence?"

Prataprao saw that he had betrayed himself and was at first too confused to speak. Then he muttered surlily " To ruin a foe, deceit must at times be practised. Even Krishna practised it."

"Never mind " I said with a laugh " I daresay he deserved it." For I began to fear that I should lose the rest of the story. "That is so. I see the Sahib understands" continued Prataprao much relieved. " And so, too, did King Shivaji." He spoke no word of the patil's son. He merely said 'Prataprao, I am pleased with your worship of me. I am ready to grant you a boon. What would you have ?' I ought, no doubt, to have wished for the speedy triumph of the English. But in a dream one is not master of one's speech. I placed my forehead again on the ground and said 'Grant me, I pray thee the life of our Burram Sahib, for he is sick unto death.' The king smiled at me and vanished. Almost at once I awoke and tears of joy were streaming down my cheeks, for I knew that the king had heard my prayer. Mane and the other sepoys who slept near asked me what had happened, for my face, so they said, was shining as one who had seen a god. Then I told them and they all salaamed to me. For they knew, so they said, that I had won Burram Sahib from the clutches of Yama* by my unceasing devotion. Just then the havildar came up and asked us the cause of our talk. Mane told him. But the havildar doubted my story. ' Who knows ' he said ' whether the tale is true or whether the dream, even if Prataprao dreamt it, had a meaning or was not a creation of a tired brain. Let Mane and me go to Johnson Sahib, who has just come to camp. He has in his hand a bundle of letters. Perhaps he has news of Burram Sahib.'

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* Four arms are the sign of divinity. The trident and conch are symbols of the God Shiva.

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* Yama is the God of death.

"Mane and the havildar walked towards Johnson Sahib and at a little distance I and one or two others followed, so that we might hear what was said. When the havildar came close to the Sahib, he saluted and said in Hindustani. "The Sahib has received letters. He may have received news of Burram Sahib. I and the men of our company hope that Burram Sahib is well." The Sahib's face lit up with a smile as he replied "Yes indeed, havildar, I have just received a wire from the doctor. Burram Sahib reached England well yesterday." The havildar and Mane saluted and then we went back to the trenches. But that evening we paid great honour to the image and covered it afresh with red lead and gave it a great store of rice. Afterwards we ate the rice and feasted and carried the image round the camp in a palanquin. And I also received great honour. Even the havildar salaamed to me. For all knew that it was by my prayers and worship that Burram Sahib had come back from the claws of Yama..........."

"You must have been pleased at the honour paid you" I said, for the sepoy had paused and seemed unable to go on.

"Yes, Sahib, I was pleased alike at the honour paid me by men and the vision vouchsafed me by God. But that pleasure was a little thing compared with the joy I felt that our Burram Sahib would soon be well and would come back to us to lead us against the Turk."

Here the sepoy's voice broke altogether and the tears coursed each other down his bronzed cheek. I put my hand on his shoulder and said :

"Be not sad, Prataprao. Why weep when your Sahib is safe ?"

"The Sahib is right" replied the sepoy "I am weak with my wound. Indeed I should rejoice, for soon we shall be together on the Tigris fighting the Turk." Suddenly the tears left the sepoy's eyes and they kindled at the thought of battle. He sat up in bed. And then for the first time in its history the long whitewashed room of the little hospital heard the famous cry, with which the Maratha horse once slashed their way to victory on a hundred stricken fields.

"Har Mahadev! Har Mahadev!"

But his triumph was short lived. A moment later the gaunt Eurasian nurse reappeared at the door. "You really must go sir" she said "You have stayed far too long and you have excited all the patients. Just look they are all sitting up in bed."

I looked round and indeed every patient in the hospital whether Gurkha, Sikh or Afghan, was sitting up glaring in our direction with the most sinister expression. The Maratha war cry had roused most unpleasant memories.

"But Nurse," I protested "Prataprao has not yet told me how he got wounded."

"I can't help it" she said firmly. "You must go now. If you want to hear that story you must come some other day."

"The pisach (the she devil)," growled the sepoy.

"Nay Prataprao, she is right. I must go now, but I'll come in a few days and talk to you again."

The sepoy's face lit up and he said as he shook my hand: "Barre Sahib, Barre" (Right, Sir, Right) "lavakar yea, lavakar yea" (come again soon, come again soon).

THE OUTCASTE'S STORY.

It was a coldish evening at Pandharpur in July 1918. The river Bhima was in full flood and the sun was setting. As sometimes happens in India, the setting sun was reflected on the eastern almost as vividly as on the western horizon and clear against the farther bank of the Bhima close to Chokamela's dipmala,* I saw the form of a solitary anchorite, sitting motionless with his face rigidly fixed in the direction of the temple of Vithoba, as Krishna is here called and worshipped. I thought to myself that the man might have a story to tell. I hailed a ferry boat with a redheaded horse as a figure head and bade the ferryman take me to where the anchorite was seated. The ferryman asked an exorbitant price. But after a little haggling, he agreed to take me there and back for eight annas. I wanted his help in case the anchorite proved taciturn.

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* Stone pillar on which lamps are hung.

I got into the ferry boat. A vigorous push of the ferry man's oar drove it off the sandy shore and a moment later we were bobbing and tossing on the waves of the flooded river. It was a long pull across, for in July the Bhima is half a mile wide. At last we reached the shore below where the dipmala stood and I clambered up with some difficulty, for the bank here is some twenty feet above the stream. When I reached the top, I saw my anchorite still sitting motionless, as I had seen him from the opposite bank. I went close to him, salaamed and spoke to him a few words in Marathi " Apan kon ahat, kothun ala, apali zat konti " (Who are you ? Whence have you come ? What is your caste ?) The anchorite sprang straight to his feet, drew himself rigidly to attention and then saluted in the most precise soldierly fashion, his right fore finger meeting his forehead close to the right temple and an inch or so above his right eyebrow. I saluted in return as an officer would a sepoy and said " Pray tell me are you a sepoy or are you a bairagi (anchorite) "?

" Sahib, I am both and as you seem to speak Marathi, perhaps you might like to hear my story."

As that was the very reason, why I had come across the river, I agreed readily and sat down on a stone close to him.

" My name is Ramnak, Sahib" he began "and I am a Mhar* of Mangalvedha."

" You mean Chokhamela's town " I interjected. In reply the anchorite sprang to his feet and again saluted me " Ah, Sahib " he said " how come you to know about Chokhamela ?" "Why" I replied "he was the great Mhar anchorite and I have read about him in the poet Mahipati's Bhaktivijaya." "Phar barre" (that is very good) said the anchorite resuming his seat "then the Sahib will follow my story the better. I am a Mhar, as I said, of Mangalvedha and my father used to tell me that we were descended from the great Mhar saint himself; and indeed it must have been true, I think, for the other villagers used to bear him out. But whether I was descended from the saint or not, I was much nearer in spirit to my great grandfather. He was a subhedar in the 2nd Grenadiers and he fought at Koregaon against the Peshwa. He had told his son my grandfather and my grandfather had told my father and my father had often told me all about the battle. The Sahib may have seen the column at Koregaon?" he said looking at me enquiringly.

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* Mhar is one of the lowest castes.

"Yes" I answered "it is only 18 miles from Poona and I have several times been to see the tombs of the British officers who fell there."

"Yes, Yes" said the anchorite excitedly. "They were Chissom and Wingit Sahibs (Chisholm and Wingate). But the Sahib knows the wonderful story and you can guess how it affected me, whose great grandfather had been at the battle. I wanted to become a sepoy, but the Sarkar some years before ordered that Mhars should be no more enlisted—why I do not know—the Sarkar had no doubt some good reason. Then the war came and I vowed that, order or no order, I should become a soldier. One night I made a bundle of my clothes and I walked to the nearest station. Thence I went by train to Poona. There I bought such clothes as a Deccan Maratha wears and put a yellow sect mark on my forehead. Now as I alighted from the train, I had seen a subhedar looking out for recruits. For it is at stations that the recruiting officers most often get their recruits. Young lads who have lost their tickets or have been robbed and cannot get home; or boys who have got into trouble in their village and having run away do not know what to do with themselves, such as these are frequently caught in the recruiting officers' net. The subhedar had looked at me when I alighted; but he had noticed my Mhar earrings and clothes and he knew me to be a Mhar and did not waste a second glance. But now when I came to the station dressed as a Maratha, wearing Maratha earrings and with a yellow sectmark on my forehead, he at once fixed on me as a likely prey. He came up and began talking to me in a most friendly way, urging me to join the army and making me the most wonderful promises of the pay and honours that awaited me, if I listened to him. I was only too willing to enlist, but I hid my eagerness lest he might suspect me to be no Maratha. I grumbled in reply that I had a field at home and an aged mother and a young wife and two bullocks and that I could not leave them. But the subhedar added oath to oath that if I joined the army, I should be able to buy a hundred fields and two hundred bullocks and that I should be able to deck out my old mother and my young wife with jewels even as the rich Bhattias of Bombay deck out their women. I knew, of course, Sahib, that the subhedar was lying, for my great grandfather had come by no such riches when he served the Sarkar; but I pretended to believe him and at last I agreed to join as a recruit. The subhedar would have given me liquor to drink, so pleased was he. But I feigning caste scruples refused; he, however, laughed at my scruples and overcoming easily his own, had a dram at a liquor shop near the station. Then he took me to the recruiting station where I was duly measured and passed. Afterwards I was enrolled in a Maratha company; but now my real troubles began. My fellow sepoys asked me my village and my family and I had to make up all sorts of tales to satisfy them; and sometimes I would contradict myself and they would cross-examine me; and at last they suspected me so strongly that they complained to the Sahib that I was no Maratha. The Sahib sent for me. I threw myself at his feet and told him the whole truth and begged him in view of my great grandfather's service not to send me away. And the Sahib was a just man and a clever one. He told my subhedar that he had questioned me and found me to be a genuine Maratha but that I had been foolish enough to take part in a dacoity and had enlisted to get away from the police. But that only proved that I was a lad of spirit and that I was to be troubled no more.

Thereafter my comrades left me alone and as I was quick to learn—we Mhars, as the Sahib knows, are sharper than the Marathas—the Sahib made me first a lance naik, then a naik (corporal); and it was as a naik that I sailed with our draft to East Africa. When we got there, things were not going well with us. You remember, Sahib, how the British had failed to take Tanga?" I sadly nodded assent, as I had lost several friends in that disastrous landing. "To avenge himself for that defeat our general thought he would take Issin Fort". "Issin Fort" I repeated doubtfully then a ray of light flashed across my mind "Yassin Fort you mean?" I said "Hoy Sahib (Yes Sir) Issin Fort we sepoys called it, but the Sahib doubtless knows the right way to speak it. But our general's troops were too few and the German General Forbik Sahib was a very Ravan* for cleverness. When we tried to outflank his men, Forbik Sahib outflanked us again and we were led astray by treacherous guides and we were beaten and had to retire suffering great hardships. At last we were so harassed by their Askaris (African sepoys) that our captain called us up one evening and said we should have to march all night to get rid of our enemy. This was bad news, as we had been walking all day and we were half dead with fatigue. However, we knew that what the Sahib ordered was right. Then the Sahib said that he could spare no men to carry the wounded, so that if any man fell out he would be left behind. The others did not so much mind, but I had been wounded in the leg in the day's fighting and my heart sank when I heard the Sahib's words. Still, as a naik, I could not but say "Accha Sahib" with the rest. Then the march began. The horrors of it I shall never forget. We must have walked 20 miles and yet the Sahib would not let us rest. If anyone fell out too exhausted to move, a man-eating panther would spring out of the jungle and carry him off. The panthers of those parts are not timid creatures like those of the Deccan, but they rush at any man who goes alone in the jungle and carry him off. All the time we marched my leg pained me and fever burnt me up; but still I staggered on dropping further and further behind. At last I could go no further and I fell like a log on the path. As long as I could hear our men walking away I did not feel afraid, but when the sound of their feet no longer came to me, my heart turned to stone with fear. Every twig that cracked, every leaf that fell I thought was a panther or a lion come to kill me. Nor were my fears vain. Suddenly I smelt what one smells outside a lion's cage in the Maharani Sahib's gardens in Bombay. Then I saw two great yellow lamps peering at me from out of the jungle. At first my tongue clove to my mouth with fear, but only for a moment. For I remembered how when a child I had heard from my mother's lips how Krishna of Pandharpur had helped his saints when in trouble and I resolved to call on him too.

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* Satan.

'O Cloud Dark one!' I cried 'You who helped Chokhamela when the Brahmans drove him across the Bhima come now to my aid! O Son of Vasudeva, you who helped Jagamitra and restored to life Kabir's son Kamal, come now to my aid!'

"In this strain I kept shouting at the top of my voice. So long as I could do so, the lion or panther or whatever it was did not rush at me. But it did not go away and ever nearer I saw the baleful glare of its great eyes through the scrub jungle, as it moved round and round me. At last my voice failed me and I knew that in a few moments I should not be able to shout any more. I summoned my strength and gave a final call louder than any of the others, calling on Shri Krishna to save me. Then I folded my hands bowed my head and resigned myself to the death, that Destiny had written on my forehead. But lo! instead of feeling the beast's teeth in my throat, I heard a "Wuff! Wuff!" and a noise as if the wild beast was racing in terror through the forest. I looked at the spot where I had last seen its eyes and there standing several feet off the ground, I saw all shining

Shri Krishna himself. He had four arms and in his hands he carried his club, his discus, his war horn and his lotus. On his head was a golden crown and over it stretched the six heads of his great serpent Shesh. On his chest was the curl of hair that we call the Srivatsa, round his loins was his silken cloth and under his feet was the brick, on which he has stood for so many ages at Pandharpur. He smiled at me and I knew that he had come to save me. But I could not utter a word of thanks ; I fell over in a dead swoon. When I next recovered consciousness, I was being carried into camp. For our Captain Sahib was better than his word. When he got to camp three miles or so from where I had fallen, he sent out stretcher bearers and in this way saved a score or so of his men including myself.

"In the camp my wound was dressed and I was sent in hospital in India ; but it was nearly two years before I was well enough to go back to the front. In the meantime things had been going badly with the Sarkar in the war and they resolved to recruit Mhars again. On hearing this, I went to the Poona dépôt and told the Sahib that I was a Mhar and wished to be transferred to a Mhar regiment. When the Sahib heard my story, he agreed and he sent me with a note to the Colonel Sahib of the newly raised Mhar regiment; and the Colonel Sahib made me a subhedar (sergeant) in his regiment. I drilled the Mhar recruits and when they were ready for service I went with them to Africa once more to fight that Rakshas (devil) of a Forbik Sahib the German general. But he was more cunning than ever and although we marched up and down Africa, we never caught him.

"At last the *ikbal* (good fortune) of our Maharana Sahib prevailed over the *ikbal* of the German Maharana Sahib and the latter seeing himself beaten ran away right out of his kingdom. I was now subhedar major (sergeant major) and I went to my Colonel and asked for leave to give up the service. At first he would not hear me; but

I told him how Shri Krishna had saved my life and I said that it was only just that in return, I should give him my life's service. At last he gave way, shaking my hand and said that if I thought like that, he would not hinder me, but that he was sorry to lose so good a soldier. Those were his very words, Sahib, and you can guess how proud I felt. But the path of my duty stretched in front of me to Pandharpur, so I had to tread it. I saluted the Colonel Sahib and in due time I was sent to Bombay, whence I at once came to Pandharpur and here I have been ever since."

" But why do you live here, Ramnak ? " I asked " why do you not live in the town ? They allow Mhars to go as far as the outer-gate of Shri Krishna's temple."

The Mhar soldier's eyes flashed, as he answered proudly "I have served, Sahib, in the war as a sepoy of the Maharana and I could not bear to be turned back at the temple gate by some Brahman priest. So I came to Chokhamela's dipmala and what better place could I choose. From here I can see the spire of Shri Krishna's temple. It was here that Shri Krishna comforted Chokhamela and dined with him after the Brahmans had driven him out of Pandharpur."

"Tumchen mhananen kharen ahe (what you say is true)" I said, and rose to go, for where he lived was none of my business. I thanked him many times for his story and offered him a few rupees. But he would take no money "You have treated me as a friend" he said courteously "and from a friend I could not take a gift of money; but if your Honour would give me some cigarettes, I should gladly take them." I emptied my cigarette case into his hand. He drew himself to his full height, saluted and held out his right hand. I shook it warmly and left him to go back to my boat. As we pushed off from the shore, I looked back at Ramnak. He was squatting with his legs tucked up under him, his hands folded in front and as his lips moved, I heard faintly the words "Krishnaya namahaha (I bow to

Krishna) Mitraya namahaha (I bow to Mitra). He had once more become the anchorite and was repeating to himself the thousand names of the Most High.

THE COURTESAN'S STORY

It was almost a year to a day after my meeting with my friend the anchorite, that I again found myself in the rest house at Pandharpur. I had finished the work for which I had come and I was lying in a long chair in the verandah, drinking a whisky and soda. Just then my butler came up with the news that a woman wished to see me. "What on earth does she want?" I asked. The sun was setting and I could not imagine what business a woman could have with me at that hour of the day. "I asked her" replied my servant "but all I could get out of her was that she had heard the Sahib liked stories and that she had one to tell him." "Oh! if she has a story to tell" I said " Let her in. It will pass the time before dinner. " The butler salaamed, went out and in a few moments brought back with him a pretty girl, who salaamed to me with a careless movement of the right hand. She was dressed in a silk sari, and wore a heavy pearl nose ring supported by a wisp of hair. She had silver bangles and anklets and gold rings and toe-rings. Her eyes were darkened with kanjal, a preparation of lampblack, and all her person gave out a scent of attar and sandalwood oil. She walked with a swinging motion of her heavy hips and with her toes turned inwards. Her gaze had none of the timid bashfulness, that distinguishes the Indian lady from her English sister. A glance at her was enough to tell me that my lady visitor was a priestess of Aphrodite.

"Well, Bai Sahib" I said with a smile "what can I do for you? I am afraid I am too old for one so young and beautiful as yourself."

"The Sahib is too kind" she answered with a languishing look "The Sahib seems dull, shall I tell him a story?"

"Please do" I said "tell me the story of yourself and I fancy it will be as interesting as any Puranic legend."

"Very well, Sahib" said the girl "I will and I think it will prove not uninteresting. My name is Saraswati. I came from Bombay originally and I was a pupil of the famous Kitty Jan."

"Kitty Jan ?" I asked "who was she ?"

"The Sahib cannot in his youth have spent much time in Bombay, or he would certainly have known Kitty Jan" retorted my visitor "She was the reigning beauty there thirty years ago. She was the daughter of a dancing girl and an English official and she sang divinely both English and Indian songs."

I still had to plead ignorance of this paragon of seduction.

"Well, it is not of much consequence, Sahib. I do not remember my parents. They were bhattias,* so Kitty Jan said, and one of her agents stole me, when only two years old at a railway station. The agent took me down to Bombay and Kitty Jan took charge of me. She was very kind to me and she tried hard to make me sing like herself. But I had no music in my head and I could not learn although I tried as hard to learn, as she to teach me. When I was twelve, Kitty Jan sold my innocence to a rich young Hindu of Bandra for several thousand rupees and banked them. That was one of the ways she made her money. Thereafter I lived with her and followed her trade. But although I was thirty years younger than she was, the visitors at her house always preferred her to me. She was so fair and had seen so much and she could sing like a gandharva.* Nor was she lacking in wit. Woe betide the youth who tried to make fun of her! She soon had him blushing to his eartips, while the whole room rocked with laughter.

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* A caste of traders from Guzarat

"When I was sixteen Kitty Jan moved from Bombay to Haidarabad in the Deccan. She said that the air of Bombay no longer suited her. Perhaps also she wished to try her charms on a new set of clients. Any way she was soon as great a success in Haidarabad as in Bombay and all the young Moghul nobles raved about her eyes, her fair complexion and her saucy wit. One day there came to her house a gay young Musulman. He was a trooper in the Bombay lancers and his name was Farid Khan. He had been drawn to the house by the fame of Kitty Jan, but when he came his eyes turned to me. He was the first visitor, who had ever preferred my looks to those of Kitty Jan and I felt ever so grateful to him for it. Nor did Kitty Jan mind. She merely laughed and called us by the names of various famous lovers, Rama and Sita, Majnun and Laila, Romeo and Juliet and I know not what else. There was one dark spot in our sky. Farid Khan's leave was quickly nearing its end and he was due to return to Poona where his regiment was stationed. He wanted to marry me and take me with him. But Kitty Jan would not let me go, unless he paid her Rs. 2,000. Of course a lancer like Farid Khan had not even Rs. 200. So we resolved to seize the first chance that came and run away together. But that was not easy. Kitty Jan guessed what we intended and kept me shut up in my house with one of her men friends to watch me. Whenever I tried to go out as if on an innocent walk, Kitty Jan always knew of it and had me brought back. At last the chance Farid Khan and I were longing for came. The river at Haidarabad rose higher than it had ever risen before. The water swept round our house. Other houses all round were crumbling to nothing and Kitty Jan saw that unless we at once left we should all be drowned, as indeed many of our neighbours had been. I and Kitty Jan and one or two other girls whom she had in the same way bought or stolen for her trade went out of the house together; but at the first corner I slipped away and ran as hard as I could to Farid Khan's house. By a lucky chance he was in. I told him how I had run away and he was delighted at my wit and courage. That evening he took me by train to Poona and I lived in the lancer lines with him as his wife.

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* Cherub

After a time he found the cost of keeping me on his slender pay too heavy ; for how could I, used as I was to the luxury of Kitty Jan's house, be content to live on his beggarly Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 a month ? So we left the lines and went to live with another lancer Buland Khan who had a house in the city. He had a rich father who made him an allowance. So we went to live with him and even as Draupadi did", (here the naughty little wretch's eyes twinkled gaily), "I managed to be a faithful wife to more than one husband. After a time, however, Buland Khan's money also gave out. His father had married a second time and turned a deaf ear to all his son's prayers for money. He sent him Rs. 50 every month. But what were Rs. 50 a month to me, who wanted jewels and silk dresses, such as I had worn with Kitty Jan ? At last my two husbands were in despair. We were only half way through the month and neither Farid Khan nor Buland Khan had a pice between them. What was worse was that our credit was exhausted. No one would sell us a thing save for ready money and we had none. 'You must get some money or I shall leave you !—I said to Farid Khan.'

'Where can I get it ?' he retorted sulkily.

'That is known only to God' I said 'But there is a milkwoman who brings us milk. She always wears a string of gold sequins and other ornaments round her neck. Why not get the money from her ?'

'You little fool' snarled back Farid Khan 'She will not let us have any more milk on credit ; is she likely to lend us money ?'

'Man with a buffalo's understanding' I answered 'Are borrowing and lending the only ways by which money changes hands ?'

'What do you mean ?' said Farid Khan, but his face grew pale and I knew that he had guessed my meaning. Now, Sahib, I never meant that Farid Khan and Buland Khan should kill the poor old milk woman. My idea was that they should jump out of some dark corner and pretending they were robbers, snatch away her jewelry. Nor would there have been any great harm in this for of what manner of use was the sequin necklace to an ugly old milk woman? Indeed it only drew attention to her ugliness, whereas round my neck it would have enhanced my beauty. I explained this that evening to the two lancers and for several days afterwards, they watched in dark lanes to try and catch her. But she was no fool, that old milk seller. She always plied her trade by day and she avoided dark lanes and gulleys. If anyone asked her for milk, she bade him bring his jug and get it filled in the main road. Thus things grew worse and worse. We only lived at all, by pawning one of my gold toerings. But when I gave it to Farid Khan, I warned him that I should leave him before the week was out, unless he gave it back to me together with a money present by way of interest. Farid Khan's wits were sharpened by the fear of losing me, so he went the same day to the milk woman and told her that he had come by some money and would pay her bill, if she went back with him to his house. In this way he baited the trap for her and the miserly old thing was caught in it. She came back with him to our house and came inside. Directly she did so, Buland Khan shut the door behind her and Farid Khan flung her on the ground. She had been too astonished to do anything, until she felt her necklace go from off her neck and then she fought like a fiend. She screamed, she kicked, she bit and made such a fearful uproar that the two men had to tie her sari round her head and neck, while they took the rest of her ornaments and her purse. When they had taken all she had, they undid her sari and would have let her go. But she was dead. Whether they had tied her sari too tight round her neck and had strangled her or whether the loss of her money and jewelry had broken her heart, I do not know. But she was stone dead, there was no doubt about it; and the next question was what we should do with the old wretch's body. The men asked me. But I would not help them, as I did not wish to be mixed up in the murder. 'You killed her' I said. 'You must hide her body or the Sarkar will hang you.' At last they got angry with me and dragging the old woman's body into an inner room, covered it with a sheet. Then they went out and did not return until late at night. They brought back with them a wooden box. They made me help them to tie the dead body as tightly as possible in the sheet. They next stuffed the body into the wooden box and went out again. Farid Khan carried the box and Buland Khan carried his bedding and a bundle of pots to make it look as if they were travellers. I learnt afterwards that they threw the box and its contents into a well two or three miles away. I slept until six next morning, when Farid Khan woke me up and told me that I must go to Bombay. I at first refused. But Farid Khan had, it would seem, lost all his love for me. He looked at me as if he would kill me. 'You have made me a murderer, you vile woman!' he said 'I shall not let you stay here and betray us.' Buland Khan added some words of the same sort and I was so frightened that I agreed to do whatever the two men told me. They took me to the railway station and Farid Khan went with me to Bombay. There he took me to a house kept by a miserly old Jewish woman and told me to stay there until he came to fetch me. As he gave the old Jew woman only two rupees, it was not long before she drove me out of the house. I was very angry at the way I had been treated and I also heard a rumour that the police had found the box with the dead woman's body inside it in the well and were looking for me. I sold my remaining jewelry and went by train to Surat. I lived there for some weeks, until one day I heard a footstep on the staircase and a loud knock at my door. My blood turned to ice. I opened the door and there in front of me stood two Poona policemen. They had found me out and they questioned me and cross questioned me until I told them everything. Nor to tell the truth was I really loth to do so, as I was burning with rage against Farid Khan and Buland Khan for the way they had turned me out and had kept for themselves the milk woman's ornaments.

" After taking down my story in writing, the two policemen took me to a magistrate, where I repeated it and the same evening I was taken to Poona. There I gave evidence before the judge sahib and in the dock were Farid Khan and Buland Khan. They scowled at me in order to frighten me, I suppose. But I was not afraid of them and I told the Judge Sahib the truth. One must tell the truth, Sahib, is that not so, when one takes an oath in the Sarkar's court ? "

" Yes, indeed that is so," wondering how much truth the young lady would have told, had she not been anxious to square accounts with her former lovers. " But how did the police come to know that Farid Khan and Buland Khan were the murderers ? "

" Well, Sahib, it was really not very hard. The milk woman had been seen going with Farid Khan just before she disappeared. The next day Farid Khan and

Buland Khan vanished, leaving the door of the house locked from the outside. Then the police on hearing that the milk woman was missing sent divers down the wells round Poona and found the box with the body inside it. The box had the shopkeeper's name on it and he told the police that a man in a lancer's uniform had bought it. Then the two young fools getting frightened sent the milk woman's jewelry by registered post to Haidrabad and the postal officers having been warned, found the parcel and handed it over to the police. On these facts the police arrested Farid Khan and Buland Khan and learnt from them that I had gone to a Jewish woman in Bombay. From her they learnt that I had left Bombay. They made enquiries for me in the Deccan and then in Gujarat. In the end they found me in Surat."

"Well what happened to Farid Khan and Buland Khan?" I asked, as I had got quite interested in the fate of the two young ruffians."

"The judge convicted them" replied

Saraswati "but he did not hang them, as he should have done. He sentenced them to the Black Water (transportation) for life."

"Oh well" I said "they were quite young, were they not?"

"They were young in years" replied Saraswati severely. "Farid Khan was 20 and Buland Khan 21. But they were old in wickedness, or they would not have treated me as they did and the Judge Sahib should have hanged them." Then giving me her most seductive look and coquettishly drawing her sari across her face, she asked me in a way that left no doubt as to her meaning. "Now that I have told the Sahib my story, does he want nothing more from me?" As she spoke she poked at a pebble with the big toe of the right foot.

"Nay Bai Sahib" I answered with a laugh. "I have work to do and you really must excuse me."

"The Sahib is as virtuous as Bhishma*" said Saraswati with a slight sneer.

"And the Bai Sahib" I retorted "is

as virtuous as Draupadi."*

The sneer on my visitor's face changed into so deep a scowl that not wishing to incur the little fiend's vindictive enmity, I at once said soothingly "Nay, Bai Sahib, be not angry; even the virtuous Bhishma would have felt the power of your beauty; and if he might not love you, he would at least have paid it tribute. As I spoke, I put two ten rupee notes into her hand and said "One is for the story, Bai Sahib, and the other for your pretty face."

Saraswati's anger went as quickly as it had come. She salaamed as before and turned to go. I watched her as she went down the drive, swinging her heavy hips in a wide circle. As she was about to turn the corner of the rest house, she looked back and called mockingly, "May Shri Krishna of Pandharpur, Sahib, bestow on you a second youth."

Before I could think of a retort, she had gone for ever. But the scent of her attar and sandalwood oil haunted the verandah for a full hour afterwards.

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* Characters in the Mahabharata.

THE VAMPIRE'S TREASURE

Vithu Naik was a Mhar* but he was not an ordinary Mhar. He was the priest of Vetal, king of the ghosts, whose ring of stones stood outside D–, a village on the road between Poona and Mahableshwar. It was Vithu Naik's task twice a month on the full moon and on the new moon to whitewash the ring of stones and put red lead on their tips. He had also to see that Vetal's "vet" or cane rested always by his side, that his chief captain, Bhangya Bawa, had his chilim or pipebowl filled with bhang or hemp water, that on Mahashivratra day, the Indian Hallows Eve, offerings of rui flowers and of "bhasm" or holy ashes should be plentifully strewn near Vetal, and that on Holi, just before Easter, and on Dasara, a day in October, the ghost king should feast on milk, butter and cakes and (if it could be begged or stolen) a fat little Deccan fowl.

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* A low caste of the Deccan.

But this morning he was deep in thought. He had the evening before made a strange find. As he was going along a path by the side of a torrent bed that came down from the western hills to the Deccan plain, he had seen something bright on the ground. He had picked it up and had found it to be a gold coin. He looked about for some explanation of its presence and slightly moving a boulder, had seen a dozen or so others. A few feet higher up he had seen an earthen pot. Its neck was broken and some of its contents scattered. The recent rain had washed them a few feet away, but the bulk still lay inside the pot. Vithu Naik put one hand inside and drew out a handful of coins, similar to those lying on the ground. Although quite unworn by use they were several centuries old, for they were of the coinage of the Ahmadnagar kings. They had evidently belonged to some Maratha noble, who had in the stormy days of Shah Jehan buried them and then had died in battle, carrying his secret with him. Vithu Naik had put the handful of coins into his turban and had been about to put as many more there as he could carry, when he had heard a fearful shout on the hill above him. A moment later a great boulder had rushed past him, missing him by a few feet. Vithu Naik had dropped the gold coins in terror and had fled for his life. He knew well that evil spirits were always watching hidden treasure and he had no doubt but that the vampire who owned this store was warning him to go lest some worse thing befell him. Indeed, had not a girl in his own village come upon a treasure some years before, and had not the "bhut" (ghost) who guarded it jumped down her throat and possessed her, so that she had hiccoughed night and day for several weeks and then had died miserably of weakness? Vithu Naik, therefore, had run all the way home without looking back once, and after a broken night in which he had several times frightened his wife by shrieking in his sleep, he was now sitting within Vetal's ring. What was he to do? If he told the other villagers he knew what would happen, they would say that he was a Mhar and not entitled to anything. The village was a Maratha village, therefore all treasure trove in it belonged to the Marathas, and they would seize the gold themselves. In the end the sub-inspector would come and say that the village was neither a Maratha village nor a Mhar village, but the Sarkar's village. He would then seize the treasure, and keeping half himself, would send the other half to the Treasury. Then Vithu Naik began to think that perhaps he had been frightened without cause. The boulder might have been dislodged by accident. It had been dusk the previous evening and in the grey evening light the bravest men feel qualms. He would go again to the spot at once after his midday meal. He went back to his house about noon, had his scanty midday meal which his wife, a hideous Mharin, cooked for him, and then saying that he meant to have his siesta under a tree, left her to finish the scraps.

Once out of the house Vithu Naik felt very brave. It was July, but there was a break in the rains and the sun was shining bright and warm, sucking up the rain from the soaked earth and filling Vithu Naik with the sense that all was well with the world. Tapping his ironshod staff on one of the stones that lay scattered about the fields, he stepped out briskly. The spot where the treasure lay buried was at least five miles from his village, and although the Deccan peasant can outwalk any of the children of men, it was more than an hour before Vithu Naik came close to the spot he sought. In the meantime, as he went west into the hills the clouds had gathered, light rain was falling, mists hung about the landscape, until, although it was only 2 p.m., it was almost as dark as the previous evening. A dead cow killed by a panther lay piteously on the hillside not far away. An eagle shrieked from a neighbouring mountain. A raven croaked dismally from a stunted tree top, until at last all Vithu Naik's fine courage oozed drop by drop from his fingertips. A few steps more and he had reached the treasure, when again a boulder crashed past him and the same awful voice shouted or seemed to shout at him from the hill. Vithu Naik's doubts as to the presence of the vampire vanished at once. He was now certain of it. He turned on his heel and never stopped running, until he came in sight of his own village. There he flung himself to rest between Vetal and Bhangya Bawa, and it was not until an hour later that he had recovered enough to go back to his hut and give his wife some lame excuse for his long absence. That night he hardly slept at all.

Another man would have given up the search, but Vithu Naik was obstinate and he could not get that treasure out of his head. If he could only get it into his house and bury it, he could some months hence bring it out little by little, and gradually buy up the Mhar lands round the village and become in time owner of the Mhar watan–the chief of all the village Mhars, treated with some courtesy even by the patil (village headman) and the Kulkarni (village accountant). What could he do? At last an idea struck him. He had heard an old woman say some years before, that the only way to appease an evil spirit was to offer it human blood. If one did that, one could get anything out of it. Even a vampire would give up its riches, if it were given human blood to drink. He must therefore give the vampire human blood to drink and then it would let him take its wealth without troubling him. Still it was easy to talk of giving the vampire human blood, but how was he to do it? One's own blood was no good. It must be somebody else's--best of all a little girl's. Just then he saw in the distance little Ramabai playing with her younger brother about two fields away. Ramabai was eight years old. Her little brother was hardly two. They were the children of a fine old subhedar major, who had served in the army for thirty years. He was, it was true, a Mhar and had to live in the

the Mhar quarter. But everyone respected him and the Assistant Collector always shook him by the hand, when he inspected the village. The old Mhar subhedar had always been kind to Vithu Naik and Vithu Naik and Ramabai were great friends. He liked her and would bring her sweetmeats from the neighbouring grocer's shop or, on the sly, break off a piece of sugar cane for her from the Marwadi's sugar cane field on the canal. To Vithu Naik she seemed sent by Providence. Here was just the little girl whose blood would appease the vampire. He would not kill her, he would just cut her arm and pour the blood out near the pot. The cut would no doubt hurt her ; but he would cure her pain with a double dose of sweetmeats. He stood up and called Ramabai, who hearing the voice of her friend came running up to him.

" Come for a walk", said Vithu Naik, ingratiatingly, " and I shall give you twice as many sweetmeats, as I have ever given you efore." The guileless Ramabai joyfully consented and the two started at once, Ramabai's hand clasped in Vithu Naik's. As they went west into the wild hills, Ramabai began to get a little tired and frightened. But Vithu Naik coaxed her, and lifting her up in his arms, carried her to where the treasure was buried. He seated her by the pot and took a knife out of his pocket.

"But where are the sweetmeats?" asked Ramabai, beginning to whimper.

"You shall have them when we get back to the village," said Vithu Naik, soothingly, and as he spoke he drew the knife sharply across the little girl's arm. Ramabai screamed with fright and pain, and struggling to be free, dashed the blood everywhere except near the treasure.

"This will never do," thought Vithu Naik, "No blood has fallen anywhere near the pot. and it will soon cease flowing altogether." Obsessed with the thought of the treasure, he dragged Ramabai forward, and forcing her neck close to the pot he drew his knife across the main artery. To his great satisfaction the blood spurted out all over the pot and its contents. When he thought that enough blood had flowed to appease the greediest of vampires, he picked up all the gold pieces lying about, made a bag of a scarf he carried across his shoulder and emptied into it the pot of gold. Not only gold coins but gold buckles, gold clasps and a stray jewel or two glittered in the sunlight before his eyes. Here was enough to buy a dozen Mhar watans. He carefully folded the scarf over its contents and slung it over his shoulder. Then for the first time he thought of the wretched Ramabai. He looked down at her as she lay, and said "Come along, Ramabai; we will go back to the village and you will have your fill of sweetmeats"; but no answer came. He touched her with his hand moved her arm, but she made no response. She was quite dead. Vithu Naik felt a sudden shock at this. In his obsession to get the treasure, he had never thought that Ramabai would die. Yet there was no doubt about it; she was quite dead. What should he do? He thought for a moment of her father, the kind old subhedar, and a vision of his grief and of her mother's when they should miss Ramabai, flashed across his brain. Then his eyes fell on the gold and his calmness returned. After all, what was Ramabai to him? She was only a little girl of eight. She must have done some evil deed in a former life to have ended so badly in this. The treasure was his and with it he would bribe any policeman, who chanced to suspect him. He rolled aside a big boulder, put Ramabai's corpse in the hollow where the boulder had lain, and then covered it up with a number of big stones. Before he left, he carefully took off the two little silver bangles that she wore on her arms. So great was now his greed, that he could not bear to leave anything behind. He then turned eastwards with his scarf on his shoulder, and humming as he went a verse of Chokamela, the Mhar poet, he walked homewards. The burden was heavy, but so light was his heart that he barely felt it, and the miles of rough path that before had seemed so long, he hardly noticed. Half a mile from the village, he turned off the road and going into a torrent bed, dug a hole and put the gold into it. Without thinking very clearly what he was doing, he wrapped the two little bangles in his turban and went home.

In the meantime the old Mhar subhedar and his wife had missed Ramabai. They searched for her all round the house in vain, then they roused the whole Mhar quarter; at last the subhedar went to the patil and complained. The patil joined in the search for some time, then he sent a runner to Wai, the nearest police station. The report ran in the usual simple way :

"The subhedar's daughter Ramabai is missing since morning. She was wearing two silver bangles. It is feared she has been murdered for their sake. The subhedar suspects no one. Please come."

The sub-inspector on receipt of the report telegraphed to his superior, the superintendent, and rode at once the six miles to D —. He got there at 11 p. m., asked a few questions, and like a wise man went to rest until 6 a. m. the next morning. The subhedar still openly charged no one; but when he was asked whether Ramabai had any friends among the Mhars, he at once mentioned Vithu Naik. Still he could not believe that his old friend Vithu Naik would do such a thing. The sub-inspector said nothing at the time, but in a corner of his brain he pigeonholed the man's name, and later had him pointed out to him by another Mhar. Vithu was at this time sitting inside Vetal's ring, apparently very busy in his worship of the ghost king; but the sharp eyes of the subinspector noticed two things. One was that from Vetal's ring the subhedar major's outer door and the place outside it where Ramabai was said usually to have played, were visible. The other was that Vithu Naik, for a man absorbed in the worship of his god, had a curious trick of sometimes looking over his shoulder to see what the sub-inspector was doing, and at other times of looking towards a torrent bed about half a mile away. The sub-inspector kept his own counsel and continued to question all the villagers, including Vithu Naik, as to when they had seen Ramabai last. All the neighbours had seen her on the morning she disappeared, except Vithu, who was positive that he had not seen her that day. This the sub-inspector knew must be untrue, because Ramabai could not leave her house without Vithu seeing her. There was also just a shade of hesitation in his answer, and as he spoke his eyes wandered away towards the torrent bed half a mile from the village.

The sub-inspector began now definitely to suspect Vithu Naik, but he had nothing but suspicion to go on, and no one knew better than he what a dangerous guide suspicion was and how often it misled the detective officer. He neither said a word about Vithu Naik, nor even put anyone on to watch him. He took a different course. He had all the wells dragged for the girl's body. He looked up and down all the torrent beds near the village to see if the body had been buried in them. He went himself up the torrent towards which Vithu Naik's eyes had so persistently wandered. There he found some tracks. Following them he came to a spot recently disturbed. He dug there, but instead of finding a dead body, he found a scarf full of old gold coins and ornaments. This nonplussed the sub-inspector. Vithu Naik evidently knew of this hidden wealth. That was why he looked in that direction. But that did not connect him with Ramabai's murder. The sub-inspector went back to the village and sent for Vithu Naik. The latter had seen the sub-inspector go up to the ravine, and therefore guessed that the treasure had been found. When the sub-inspector questioned him, he admitted that he had buried it there. He had found it in a cleft of the hills, and wrapped it in his scarf. He took the sub-inspector to a hole in the ground that he knew of several miles from the spot where he had recently found the gold and pointed it out as the place where he had first seen the gold coins. At the same time he hinted his suspicions as regards a "lohar" or village blacksmith. He was in debt and just the man to kill Ramabai for her ornaments. The sub-inspector was getting more and more bewildered. Losing his caution, he went back to the village and searched the blacksmith's house. In it he found, hidden behind a loose brick, one of Ramabai's ornaments. Further enquiry in the village elicited from two men that they had seen the "lohar" and Ramabai talking together, just before she was missed. There seemed a strong case against the "lohar"; but he protested his innocence so stoutly that the sub-inspector was by no means convinced that he was the criminal.

At this point Vithu's luck turned. He had skilfully explained the discovery of the gold, and by going boldly into the "lohar's" house he had managed to hide in it one of Rambai's bangles. He could not bear to part with both, now that his gold had gone. He had also persuaded two enemies of the "lohar"—neighbours with whom he had quarrelled as to the boundaries of their fields—to swear that they had seen the "lohar" and Ramabai together; so he had every reason for feeling confident. Then something happened that he had not foreseen. The same afternoon—it was now four days from the crime—a villager reported to the sub-inspector that on going to the hills, he had seen some vultures flying in the air above a certain gap there. Perhaps they were hovering over Ramabai's body. The sub-inspector called the subhedar and guided by the villager went to the gap. The vultures were no longer in the air, but were seated on boulders on the hillside. As the men came they lazily rose and flapped a hundred yards away. Not far from where they had been sitting were some bones and a few bits of flesh—all that remained of the little girl. The jackals had dug her body from under the rocks and the vultures had picked her bones. At some little distance lay a red "sari" or dress. The subhedar major walked up to it and then suddenly pulled himself together. He had recognised his daughter's "sari" and had faced his sorrow as an old soldier should—at attention. The sub-inspector spoke to him. For a moment the lump in the subhedar's throat choked his speech. Then in an ordinary voice he said "Yes; I recognise Ramabai's 'sari.' This must be her body." The sub-inspector, his men and the subhedar mounted the highest peak and looked round them. In the distance they saw a shepherd boy with about fifty sheep. They called to him as only Marathas can, and he came towards them with leaden steps, evidently very frightened. The moment he came close to the sub-inspector he ran forward and threw himself at his feet. "Maf Kara, Sahib, Maf Kara! (Pardon me, Sir) and I shall tell you everything." The sub-inspector reassured him, and bade him tell the truth without fear, and this was his story.

"Six or seven days ago, Sahib, I was grazing my sheep on this very hill when I saw a Mhar walking through the gap below. He suddenly stopped and began to gaze very intently on the ground. So having nothing better to do, I for fun rolled a boulder down the hillside and gave a shout just to frighten him. Instantly he ran off as fast as he could, until out of sight. After laughing heartily at him, I went back to my sheep. The next day, but earlier in the afternoon, I again saw the same Mhar walking through the gap. He stopped at the same place, so again to frighten him I gave a shout and pushed down another boulder. This time he was even more frightened and ran so hard that I did not think that anyone could have run so quickly. I laughed until my sides ached, and went back to my sheep. Next day I thought I would see whether the Mhar would come again, so I sat on the edge of the hill behind a rock and waited. Sure enough in about an hour's time I saw the Mhar return. But this time he was not alone. He was carrying a little girl in his arms. I was so curious to know what he meant to do, that I did not roll down any more boulders. saw I him draw a knife and cut her arm. She struggled, but he overpowered her and cut her throat. When he had done this, I saw him dig out of the ground a pot and pour from it a lot of gold coins into his scarf. Then he put down the scarf, hid the girl's body under some stones, picked up his scarf and went away."

"But why did you not help the girl?" asked the sub-inspector, sternly.

"Sahib, I am only thirteen and the Mhar was a grown man. Had I interfered, he would surely have cut my throat, too."

"Well, why did you not tell the villagers?" again asked the subinspector.

"Sahib, I was afraid I should be charged with the crime. I don't know the Mhar's name. Even if I had pointed him out, he would have denied his guilt, and who would have believed me ? "

"True," said the sub-inspector. "Now come with me and point him out. If your story is true, well and good; if not, so much the worse for you."

The herd boy paid no heed to the threat, but leaving his sheep stepped out briskly with the others to the village. On arrival there the sub-inspector called up the Mhars, put them in a row, and told the herd boy to point out his man. Without any hesitation, he went up to Vithu Naik and poked his chest with his forefinger. "Toch" (that's he) he said, with a grunt. The sub-inspector arrested Vithu and searched his house. In a hole in the wall lay Ramabai's other bangle. The same evening three persons came forward to say they had seen Ramabai and Vithu talking together. Two of these the sub-inspector rejected as notorious enemies of Vithu—Mhars who aspired to be priests of Vetal. One of the three he accepted. She was an old Maratha woman, who had been absent since the day of the murder and had just returned. Lastly, when confronted with the herd boy, Vithu broke down and confessed, not only to the sub-inspector but to the magistrate to whom the sub-inspector sent him to have his confession recorded.

The sub-inspector took the treasure to Wai that night and as he went, he abstracted the jewels, meaning to keep them himself and pass the gold on to Government. On reaching home he shewed them to his wife and told her what he meant to do. This was strange conduct in a Brahman, but his wife was the daughter of a Poona pleader and a more or less educated woman. She was wise enough to see what a fool her husband was making of himself. She implored him to put the jewels back. For a long time he paid no heed to her words. At last she said "But what about the Vampire? It let Vithu alone, because he fed it with blood. Do you think it will let you keep the jewels in peace? It will either ruin you or force you to kill some other little girl to feed it; then you will hang like Vithu Naik." The argument which the lady advanced in jest, although with a grave face, won the day.

"Bai, what you say is right, and to-morrow I shall put back the jewels."

The sub-inspector was as good as his word. Next morning he added the jewels to the gold coins and ornaments and handed them over to the 1st class magistrate, an Englishman. He in due course committed the case to the sessions judge, who sentenced Vithu Naik to be hanged. The sub-inspector was made an inspector for his detective skill and his honesty. The court ordered the vampire's gold to be paid into the Government Treasury.

THE MARWADI

Mangaldas was sitting in his shop in a bazaar in Poona City. It was a small grocery shop, but he was not really a grocer by trade. The grocery business was a speculation, into which he had entered with a young Gujarati of his acquaintance. Mangaldas had provided the capital and the Gujarati managed the shop. Mangaldas' real business was in the rooms at the back. There he lent money to all who had security to offer him and it may be safely said that he never did business with anyone without being thoroughly satisfied with it; and that no one ever did business with him without bitterly regretting it. He was a Marwadi by caste, that is to say he was a merchant from a native state in Rajputana, and the Marwadis have an evil and well-earned name as the most grasping and hard-hearted money-lenders in the Deccan. Inside the back rooms of the shop were wonderful bonds, that at first sight seemed not unreasonable, for the rate of interest was only 12 per cent. They were really iniquitous ; for the borrower only received half the capital sum mentioned and had to pay interest on the full nominal capital until the last penny was paid off. For instance, if a farmer borrowed £100 he would have to sign a bond for £200 and continue to pay £24, a year, even although he had paid off all the debt but £1. Mangaldas, too, was an admirable accountant and took care that his accounts always shewed that the borrower did owe £1, although he had paid off the original debt ten times over. But at the present moment Mangaldas' face had not the happy look of a successful money-lender, thinking of his investments. He was thinking of something quite different.

For some weeks past he had noticed that his young wife was inattentive to her duties, would sit dreaming idly by the grinding mill, instead of swinging the handle round and round and singing as she did so. A fortnight ago, he had intercepted a look between her and a young Afghan policeman, Gafur Khan by name, who was on duty at the police post at the corner at the street. A week ago a pearl nose-ring, made for her at his cost on her marriage, had vanished. Two nights ago he had missed his wife at twilight. On her return she had told him that she had been to see the wife of a neighbour. He had afterwards asked the neighbour and learnt that his wife had not been there at all. Putting these facts together, Mangaldas was convinced that his wife was deceiving him with Gafur Khan. How should he revenge himself on the guilty pair? If he did not take action soon, they would run away together, taking her jewellery with them, and he would never hear of either of them again. Should he report the matter to the Superintendent of Police? But if he did so, the young Afghan would deny all knowledge of the matter. The Superintendent, with his cursed English stupidity, would not believe the husband's tale; and Gafur Khan would revenge himself by bringing a false charge against Mangaldas of receiving stolen property. His house would be searched and even though the Afghan's false case would break down, the searchers would find abundant material for bringing him to court on several true charges of receiving other stolen property. So the Marwadi sat and pondered. A few minutes later a look of satisfaction came over his face. He had found the key to the problem.

That evening Mangaldas hired a disgracefully shabby "tonga" or pony trap and drove from Poona city as fast as the wonderful Deccan ponies would take him to Euroda jail, some four miles away. At the main entrance he asked for the jailor. A jail sepoy called the jailor, who, on hearing Mangaldas' name, came in all haste to greet him. The jailor, Govindpant Joshi was a Chitpavan Brahman, who a year before had borrowed Rs. 300 from Mangaldas, and in spite of having repaid him Rs. 1,000 at least, still owed the latter, according to Mangaldas' account, Rs. 50 and was, therefore, paying his annual interest on Rs. 600, the capital sum entered in the bond. Govindpant, as Mangaldas' debtor, was very anxious to please Mangaldas in any way he could. He invited him to have pan supari, a preparation of arica nut, and to discuss the last issue of Mr. Tilak's newspaper, the "Kesari." Mangaldas graciously accepted the invitation, walked with Joshi to his house door, kicked off his shoes and entered the verandah barefoot. There the two men sat on cushions, chewed arica nut and talked politics for about half an hour. Then Mangaldas said :

"I hear, jailor Sahib, you have some very dangerous convicts in your prison".

"That is so," replied the jailor, "there is one fiend called Piru, a Mang* who was a noted dacoit leader, and is said to have committed thirty murders. The government could not prove the murders, otherwise he would have been hanged. As it was, the judge convicted him of dacoity only and gave him transportation for life. He is a desperate fellow and I fear greatly that one day he will kill me and escape."

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* A mang is a very low caste.

There was a pause for some time. Then the Marwadi's voice sank to a whisper. He explained that an evil young Afghan policeman in his quarter had recently killed a cow for mere sport, and that when he, Mangaldas, had objected, he had sprinkled some of the cow's blood over his door and then over his wife and himself. At the same time he had poured abuse on the Hindu religion and on Brahmans in particular. "What should be done ?" asked Mangaldas, "to punish this Mlenccha (infidel)."

The jailor, a strictly orthodox Brahman, was filled with fury at the Afghan's evil doing. After thinking a minute or two, he said, " The Mang might teach the Afghan a lesson, if he were paid some trifle."

The Marwadi's expression never changed, although his heart leapt with joy when he heard the jailor proposing the very scheme, that he had thought out in the shop. " Yours is a good idea, Jailor Sahib. Outcaste although the Mang is, he may be the instrument chosen of God to avenge this insult to our religion. Did not Shri Krishna himself embrace Chokamela, Mhar though he was ? Let us go and see this Mang".

The two men got up and walked to the jail. With his heavy keys the jailor opened the outer door and both men passed through it into an enclosed space. The jailor shut the outer door behind them and then opened the inner door at the other end. The men passed through it and found themselves inside the prison, a vast enclosure,in which lived hundreds of human beings who, innocent or guilty, had been condemned by the judges and magistrates to undergo various terms of imprisonment. The jailor led Mangaldas through the maze of roads and buildings and at last came to the cell where Piru Mang, as a dangerous convict, was confined. The jailor spoke to him through the bars and Piru stood up. He was a splendid specimen of humanity. He stood well over six feet; and although he had not an ounce of fat on him, such was his mighty frame that he must have weighed fourteen stone. His eyes met the jailor's full. He was without fear of any kind, but he wondered vaguely what the jailor wanted so late in the day. The Mang's cell was at some distance from the nearest convict, so the jailor could speak to him without fear of being overheard. He repeated Mangaldas' tale, adding various embellishments of his own, calculated to inflame the Mang's bigotry and hatred of Musulmans. Then he said, "O Piru, Mang though you are, the god Krishna has chosen you to punish this Mlenccha, to brush him from this earth, so that he may soon become the evil beast, that he is destined to be in his next life."

The Mang replied, "Willingly would I punish him, but how can I, confined in these walls?"

The jailor said "You shall have freedom for one day, and you shall receive in money......" here he looked at Mangaldas, who said, "five rupees."

"Give me fifty and I am your man," said

Piru. Then followed ten minutes' close haggling. In the end Mangaldas with a heavy sigh promised to give Piru twenty rupees, if he killed the Afghan and got safe back to jail without being discovered. On the completion of the bargain, the jailor and the Marwadi returned to the former's verandah. " Now, Jailor Sahib ", said Mangaldas, " If you will excuse me, I shall go home", and after salaaming courteously, was about to go.

" Nay, Mangaldas, do nothing in haste, " replied Joshi, " what am I to get out of this? I risk losing my post and must have something to repay me. "

" But you will have a reward from Heaven for punishing this Mlenccha", replied Mangaldas.

" That's true," said the Jailor, " but I must have my bond back as well ".

More haggling ensued of which the outcome, bitter to Mangaldas, was that the jailor should get back his bond, but should on the other hand pay Piru! the twenty rupees due for the Afghan's murder. The two conspirators drove back to the Marwadi's house, where the jailor received back his bond and with it in his pocket he walked joyfully back to his house at Euroda. Next evening after dark, he went to Piru Mang's cell and opened it. He shewed him the twenty rupees and promised to recommend him for a convict wardership, if he returned with his task duly done. He offered Piru a knife, but the Mang asked for his "lathi", an iron-shod bamboo club in which he had fuller confidence. The two men walked past the guard, to whom the jailor gave a meaning nod that conveyed a promise of an anna or two in cash, and passed into the darkness beyond the prison walls. There the Mang slipped off his prison clothes, and clad only in a loin cloth, walked off, his "lathi" in his hand, towards Poona city.

At 10 p.m., Gafur Khan, the Afghan policeman, was on his beat. He was good-looking in the fierce Afghan way, with a hooked nose, bold black eyes and lovelocks that peeped from under his turban. As he walked he hummed under his breath the famous Afghan air "Zakhmi Dil" or the wounded heart, for he felt pleased with his handsome self and the world at large. The previous evening, while Mangaldas was away at Euroda, his young wife had given her lover another interview and had given him a pair of gold bangles. This present as well as her previous one—the pearl nose-ring which Mangaldas had missed—Gafur Khan had sold to a neighbouring jeweller. The money which he had realised, a hundred and twenty rupees, he decided to lend out in small sums to casual labourers, trusting to his prowess as an Afghan and his position as a policeman to recover the loans with 100 per cent. interest; for an Afghan at times can be almost as hard a creditor as a Marwadi. As he thought thus happily of love and wealth, the sky seemed suddenly to drop on his head. A thousand stars flashed before his eyes and he fell face forward with a fractured skull. As he lay senseless, a second blow of

Piru Mang's lathi reduced his head to a mass of bloody pulp. Leaving the dead man on the ground, Piru Mang slipped into a by-lane and lay down to sleep for an hour or two, before returning to prison. He slept far longer than he had meant to, and did not wake until 5 a. m. He saw that the eastern sky was lightening and jumped to his feet and began walking as fast as he could back to Euroda. He had no wish to escape. He looked forward to the receipt of his twenty rupees, a large sum for him, and to many years of the pleasant life of a convict warder. As bad luck would have it, just as he was reaching the northern outskirts of the city, a burglar was escaping from a Bania's or merchant's house with a bag full of women's ornaments. He was seen by a watchman who raised a cry of Chor! Chor! (Thief! Thief). Piru Mang thought that the murder had been discovered and lost his head. He started to run as fast as he could to Euroda jail. His running drew all the crowd after him and away from the real thief, who prudently vanished down a dark alley. Had the country been a close one, Piru would have shaken off his pursuers, as he was a good runner. But the country was as bare as a man's hand. Followed by a mob a quarter of a mile behind, Piru Mang ran towards the prison gates. The jailor, who had just got up, saw him coming and formed at a glance his view of the situation. Piru had committed murder, had been detected and would, unless put out of the way, confess to the magistrates the whole story and implicate the jailor. He went to the guard at the gate and cried "There is Piru Mang! He is escaping from prison! Fire on him! Fire on him!"

The guard, who were to a certain extent in the plot, also saw the danger of the situation. Their muskets were loaded with ball and as Piru Mang came within a few yards of the prison gate, the havildar's voice rang out:

"Fire."

A deafening report followed and a thick cloud of smoke hid the landscape. When the smoke blew away the unfortunate Piru lay, a corpse, on the ground. The jailor explained to the mob that Piru was an escaped convict. The mob told the jailor about the burglary. In the course of the day the news of Gafur Khan's death reached to jailor's ears, and he wrote in a clear and lucid report for the information of his superiors, that Piru Mang had daringly broken prison and committed a burglary in Poona city. After the burglary and while trying to escape, he had murdered a policeman. Fleeing from the mob he had returned to the jail, but had refused to surrender. The guard had, therefore, been forced to fire on him and kill him.

In the meantime the Marwadi had taken the precaution to return to his native country in P—State for a spell. The evening of Gafur Khan's murder, Mangaldas had taken his reluctant wife to the railway station. He had told her that he had to arrange a marriage for a distant cousin and that she must go with him. All that night they travelled together. Mangaldas dozed most of the way, but a secret terror kept his little wife awake. They reached the border of P—State a little after 2 p. m. At the first station across the frontier Mangaldas alighted. His little wife timidly asked why he got out there instead of proceeding to his home; she received no answer. A few moments later his two huge Bhayas or watchmen from Hindustan came up and salaamed to him, saying :

"We received your telegram, O Presence, and have brought the bullock cart, as ordered."

"Put my wife in the cart," answered Mangaldas, shortly.

The poor little woman shrank to Mangaldas' side and looked at him with piteous eyes, but she might have as well tried to melt the Sahyadri mountains. "Take her" said Mangaldas, impatiently, to the Bhayas. They each took her by a wrist and half dragged, half led her out of the station to a bullock cart outside, filled with straw. They lifted her into it and Mangaldas told the cartman to drive towards a town three or four miles away. The little wife again asked in a voice so low that it could scarcely be heard, why her husband was taking her there.

"Why waste breath ?" retorted Mangaldas bitterly, "you will know soon enough."

The wretched girl gave herself up for lost and covering her face with her sari, wept silently. No man in India, particularly in a native state, would meddle in another's domestic differences, and the two big Bhayas were in any case enough to frighten away any meddlers. The cart creaked on for a couple of miles, followed by Mangaldas and the two Bhayas. At this point they came to a little wood. Mangaldas told the cartman to stop. The Bhayas lifted his wife out of the cart and carried her to a patch of thick undergrowth. There they flung her on her back. Mangaldas took out of his pocket an instrument shaped like a nutcracker, but with a keen blade inside. It was what he used for cutting betel or arica nut into bits small enough to chew. He felt the blade with his thumb and went to the prostrate woman. From his action she guessed what was in store for her. She struggled fiercely, but the two Bhayas held her arms and feet. Mangaldas stooped over her. A moment later the wretched woman felt a flame of agony, as the keen blade shore through her nose. She gave a scream of pain and fury. For great though the physical pain was, even greater probably was her feeling of shame that she was now a 'nakti' or noseless one. Mangaldas rose, wiped his betel cutter on his wife's " sari " and told the Bhayas to take her to the nearest dispensary to have her wound looked after. He himself walked back to the station and buying a ticket went to his village. In the meantime his wife was taken in the cart, more dead than alive, to the dispensary. Her mutilated nose was treated, and in course of time healed; but she remained a hideous object, never to win again the love or admiration of men. When she was well enough, she lodged a complaint with the nearest magistrate, who issued a warrant for Mangaldas' arrest. He made no attempt to hide, and was prosecuted. But magistrates in native states look at nose cutting differently from those in British India. Mangaldas said in his defence that his wife had deceived him with a low Afghan in Poona and given him some of her jewels also. The wife tried to deny the story, but the magistrate believed Mangaldas. As he never learnt of the Afghan's murder by Piru, the magistrate thought that Mangaldas had hardly exceeded his marital rights. Had he followed his own inclination, he would have acquitted Mangaldas. But P—poses as rather an advanced State. So the magistrate felt himself bound to inflict some punishment. He fined Mangaldas 500 rupees. Of these 200 were to be paid to the noseless one's parents, to whom she was sent at the close of the case; 300 rupees were credited to the State.

For the rest of his life Mangaldas grumbled at the injustice of the fine. But at heart he paid the 500 Rupees willingly enough.

He had had his money's worth.

THE NINETEENTH HOLE

It was a rainy July evening at Nasik. The little clubhouse was crowded, not only with the local golfers, but with visitors also from Bombay, who had come for a week-end to escape the wet and heat of the island city and to play on the links; for the Nasik links are the property of the Bombay Golf Club. The players had started between 4 and 5 p.m., with every hope of finishing their round without a shower. But a squall had come from the western mountains and in a few minutes the players and their caddies had raced to the clubbouse, blinded by rain such as only those know, who have been through an Indian monsoon. A few who had had far to run and were wet through ran on to their houses; but the rest put sweaters over their damp shirts and gathered round the bar—the nineteenth hole, to call it by its local name. There they proceeded to apply internal remedies to any chill that they might have contracted. Suddenly one of the men, Ravenshill, the Collector of the district, rose to his feet and said, "By Jove! there's Johnston making for the Club on his motor cycle. He'll get infernally wet!" As he spoke a motor cycle swept at full speed into the courtyard. Its rider rode it into the shed and raced into the Club.

"Hullo, Johnston! where have you been?" asked Ravenshill.

"Oh, I had to go out and enquire into one of those infernal conjugal murders. The usual thing, you know. A husband suspected his wife. He laid a trap and she and her lover fell into it. The husband and his kinsmen lay in wait for them and battered the lover to death. I shall have to send up the husband to be tried for murder; but really he was not so much to blame as the wife's lover. I wish the deuce men would leave other people's wives alone and then I should not have all this trouble."

"My dear chap," laughed Ravenshill, "it would be a dull world if there were no such thing as

"Sin sweet beyond forgiving
And brief beyond regret."

"Nevertheless I sympathize with you. To have to go out in this weather to enquire into a 'crime of passion' is enough to make one curse love and lovers. Still I remember a sexual murder that happened within my own experience; and I am hanged if I can say that anyone was to blame for it."

"Bosh!" said one of the Bombay men, who was suspected of Presbyterian leanings. "How can there be a crime and no one guilty?"

"I did not say," retorted Ravenshill, "that no one was guilty of the crime." I said that 'I could not see that anyone was to blame for it.' However, I'll tell you the story and then you can judge for yourself.

"It was some years ago when I was an assistant collector and first class magistrate, that the police brought up before me a Maratha and his wife. They wished to confess to a murder. Their story was a simple one and I recorded it in the manner laid down in the Criminal Procedure Code. The Maratha's name was Dhondu and his wife's was Godabai. They, it seems, had a great friend called Krishnarao, a neighbouring villager. One day they had asked him to dinner and they had drunk a little ' bhang,' a preparation of hemp, you know, and Dhondu had dropped off to sleep. While he slept Krishnarao had taken liberties with Godabai and had assaulted her. She was a fine, powerful woman and had been able to defend herself. But smarting from the insult, she had told her husband; and a day or two later the pair had waylaid Krishnarao on a path near the village and the husband had killed him with an axe. They had then given themselves up to the police. The police brought them to me. I recorded their confessions, as I have said, and eventually they were committed for trial at the Sessions Court. The judge sentenced the man to transportation for life and the lady to two years' rigorous "imprisonment".

"Well," said the Bombay man, "I don't

see much difficulty about that case. Everybody was to blame—Krishnarao for taking liberties, the husband and wife for taking the law into their own hands."

"Look here, old chap," said the collector, with a smile, "I cannot go on, if you interrupt me. What will you have, a vermouth or a milk-punch?"

The Bombay man decided to have a milk-punch, and as he sipped in silence the golden liquid, Ravenshill continued his story.

"The case seemed, it is true, perfectly clear. Nevertheless I often worried about it afterwards. The fact was, it was too clear. After all, the motive was hardly adequate. No harm had been done. The lady had successfully defended her virtue. Again, why should the pair have been in such a hurry to give themselves up? They might easily have waited until the police had got some evidence against them. Lastly, the wounds on the dead man were up and down his face. Such wounds could hardly have been given to a man standing upright. A man striking a standing man in the face with an axe would swing his axe round his shoulder and the blade, would, therefore, strike the victim horizontally and not vertically, and the wounds would be across and not up and down the face. However, there it was. The two accused had confessed in court and had not appealed against their convictions or sentences. So I did nothing; indeed I could do nothing.

" A year afterwards I was acting collector of Poona and went, as a visitor, over the Euroda jail. My very first visit I looked about for Dhondu and Godabai who, as I knew, were confined there. It took me some time to find them, for the Euroda jail is a huge place, but find them I did. Godabai was in the women's quarters and Dhondu in the men's. She was still the same splendid looking Maratha woman. But he looked wan and haggard, as if he had something evil on his mind. Neither of them recognised me, but when I told them that I, as magistrate, had recorded their confessions, they remembered me, or pretended they did. I went every month to visit the Euroda jail and every time I went there, I spoke to both of them. I never could get much out of Dhondu, who was evidently pining away under his sentence. But Godabai became quite friendly and I used to chat with her. She used to ask me how her husband was getting on. When I told her that he was unhappy, her face clouded over. One day when I hinted that another year would probably kill him, she broke into a passionate exclamation 'Are Bapre, atan kay karave ! tya bicharyanen kahin kelen nahin' (Good heavens what shall I do ! the poor fellow never did anything at all). She then sat down in a corner, drew her sari over her head, and shewed plainly that she wanted me to leave her alone. I knew it would be useless to question her. But I felt certain that we had not at the trial got hold of the truth. I sent for the woman warder and told her to speak to Godabai.

" ' Tell her ', I said, ' to make a clean breast of everything to me. Tell her that I do not believe that either she or her husband has been rightly convicted. If I am correct and she will tell me the truth, I shall write to the Sarkar and try to get their sentences reduced. In any case, as they have been already tried and convicted, nothing that she may say can cause their sentences to be enhanced.'

"The woman warder promised to speak to Godabai and I went away. Next month I went as usual to Godâbai's cell. She seemed pleased to see me, although evidently very nervous.

"'Well,' I asked, 'did the woman warder give you my message?'

"'Yes, Sahib, she did. If the Sahib will promise me that he will try and get Dhondu's sentence lessened and not get mine increased I shall tell him the whole story.'

"'Yes, Godabai,' I said, 'I promise'.

"Much relieved, Godabai prepared herself for her story by squatting down on the floor and adjusting her sari, so that her face but not her hair was visible.

"'Sahib,' she began, 'part of what we told you was true and part was false. We could not tell you the truth in open court because of the dishonour that it would have brought on our house.'" Here Ravenshill stopped and said "I shall not, however, give you her story in her own words, because for a long time she rambled on and on, afraid to come to the real point. At last, by much patience and much encouragement I got the truth out of her. Shortly it was as follows:

"Her family was an aristocratic one, as Deccan families go. Her husband was the second son of the patil or village headman and had a share in the village lands. Godabai was the daughter of another patil, whose family was connected by marriage with the Shindes of Kinner Kheir, a most ancient house. The dead man Krishnarao was a distant kinsman of her husband; but as they were of the same age and of the same village, they had been friends from earliest childhood. Krishnarao was married at the same time as Dhondu, that is about five years before the crime, and the two wives had become as fast friends as their two husbands. A month before the crime, Krishnarao's mother-in-law had died and his wife Narmada had gone to pay her father a visit of condolence. In her absence, Dhondu and his wife had done their best to prevent Krishnarao from feeling lonely, by asking him to dinner two or three times a week. Krishnarao greatly valued their kindness, and never thought for a moment to repay it by making love to Godabai, whom indeed he regarded as a sister. One morning a letter came from his wife's village to say that she was about to return to her husband's house. Krishnarao was delighted at the news and went round to tell his friends Dhondu and Godabai. They, pleased at his happiness, asked him to dine with them for the last time before his wife came. He accepted, and to add to the gaiety of the dinner, he, at a friend's suggestion, brought some 'bhang' with him.

"Well, 'bhang' is a most dangerous drink to play tricks with. The old 'bhang' toper can swallow large quantities without suffering much harm. But the first time that a man drinks it, it sometimes produces strange effects. It usually makes a man drowsy, but at times, if taken rashly, it acts as a terrible aphrodisiac; at the same time it seems to destroy all moral sense. To return to the dinner, Krishnarao brought his bottle of 'bhang' and all three, quite ignorant of its power, drank it as if it had been water. Directly after dinner, Dhondu fell back in a kind of coma. Krishnarao, who had never until that moment conceived the slightest desire for Godabai, felt suddenly an overmastering passion for her. He seized her by the hand and kissed her on the lips. Godabai, without the least sense that she was behaving otherwise than in the most proper manner, stripped off her single garment, a long Marathi sari, and gave herself to Krishnarao. Afterwards both he and Godabai fell fast asleep. About 5 a.m. Godabai woke up stark naked except for her bodice, and shivering with the cold. Now Maratha women of really good birth are probably the chastest women in India, and when Godabai realised that she was all but stark naked and remembered that, almost unasked, she had lost her virtue and deceived her husband with a man for whom she did not care a straw, she was seized by one of those storms of fury to which all Marathas—men and women alike—are subject. She tied her sari round her as quickly as she could. Then seizing an axe that stood in the corner of the room and lifting it over her head, she struck Krishnarao a tremendous blow with it in the face. As she was standing near his feet, the blade struck the sleeping man down and not across the forehead and entered his brain. He did not rise but began to make a bubbling sound and move his hands and feet convulsively. A second blow as hard as the first quieted him for ever. Godabai, her honour avenged, sat down in a corner of the room with her sari over her face, waiting for her husband to awake. He did not open his eyes until almost 7 a.m., when the sun was streaming into the room. At first he could not realise what had happened. He was on the floor of the dining room. It was soaked in blood. Krishnarao lay dead in a corner and Godabai sat silent in another. At last, rubbing his eyes he asked Godabai what it all meant. She told him exactly what had happened, and then going to him and putting the axe in his hand told him to kill her with it and make his honour clean, just as she had made hers. The wretched Dhondu, whose head still swam from the effects of the 'bhang,' could not believe his senses. He had loved Krishnarao as a brother, and he was dead. He was passionately fond of his wife and she was asking him to kill her too. Still as a Maratha gentleman, that was his clear duty. He rose to his feet, lifted the axe to strike Godabai, but as she sat at his feet waiting to receive her death blow, he simply could not give it. At last he flung the axe into a corner, and sitting down, covered his face with his hands.

"'You coward!' cried Godabai, contemptuously, 'I suppose I am to hang just because you care nothing for your honour.'

"Dhondu was not a coward, and the unjust taunt stung him to the quick. 'No,' he said, 'I am not a coward, and to prove it, I shall hang and you shall go free!' He then unfolded to her the plan which he meant to adopt. He and his wife would hide Krishnarao's body during the day. That night they would take and fling it somewhere outside the village; and the following morning they would tell the police that the dead man had tried unsuccessfully to outrage Godabai and that in revenge they had lain in wait for him and killed him. Godabai approved of the plan, only too glad to think that her husband was no poltroon. They hid Krishnarao's body in an inner room. She cooked her husband's food; and when he was absent in the fields, she cleaned the floor of the dining room, so that all traces of blood might vanish. That night the husband and wife lifted up their dead friend's corpse and carried it to where a path ran through a little wood, a mile or so from the village.

Next morning they gave themselves up to the police with the tale that they had waylaid Krishnarao and that Dhondu had killed him to avenge his insult to Godabai.

"'And now, Sahib,' said Godabai, 'you have heard my story. Keep your promise and get Dhondu freed if you can. He is perfectly innocent.'"

"I was so overcome with the story that for a long time I could not think what to do. I was certain Godabai was speaking the truth, but could I get the Government to believe her tale? I was quite a junior and the senior men might laugh at me and minute that the sooner I was transferred to some quiet station the better, as Poona was evidently going to my head. However, I had given Godabai my promise, so I had to keep it. I called on Pleinton, the judicial member. He was the kindest of men and he listened sympathetically to my story. He sent for the papers and after going through them he ordered the rest of Dhondu's sentence to be remitted."

"Well, was he let out?" asked one of the golfers.

"No; that was the tragic part of it," replied Ravenshill. "The secretariat wheels move slowly at the best of times; but in this case, as bad luck would have it, the Under-Secretary, who happened to be in arrears with his work, took the papers of Dhondu's case to his house and forgot all about them for several weeks. In the meantime poor Dhondu had died of misery and despair. "Well," added Ravenshill turning to the Bombay man, "I think you must admit that no one was to blame for that murder."

"By Jove, old chap, you are right", conceded the Bombay man; for in spite of his suspected Presbyterian leanings, he was a fair-minded, genial man. "It was the drink that did it. Yes, boys", he continued, shaking his head gravely, "drink is an awful thing when misused.

"Still why deny its use
"Thoughtfully taken".

Turning to the bar, he summoned the

barman and ordered thirteen fresh milk-punches—one for each of the golfers sitting round the nineteenth hole.